

792 and Grandfather called my cousin Ko Lu Pe to read it. My cousin had
 871 been at a government school for some years and though he could read
 177. and write English with some ease, he stuck at the word "circumcise".
 87 "What!" exploded Grandfather, "five years learning English, and you
 can't even read a telegram. This education is quite useless." Where-
 upon he took the grandchildren and his two young sons out of their
 schools until his wrath subsided and they quietly started attendance
 again. It is a popular stage joke also, the B.A. who returns to his village
 and is asked in good faith by the hpongyi to mend a villager's watch that
 has gone wrong. The graduate confesses that he cannot mend it. The
 monk is horrified: "What, passed B.A. and cannot mend a watch?"

527 So now on my father's birthday the monks ask jokingly and kindly
 792 about our school subjects. Their meal is laid out on a low round table,
 574 and consists of all the good things my mother can think of, for they have
 only one main meal in the day. Rice and meat and vegetable dishes are
 followed by fruit, sweet milky coffee, sweet English cakes. The monas-
 tery boys are given their meal outside; the monks, after eating, rise and
 go, and the boys follow them bearing away the gifts for the monastery.
 At once there is a general shuffling into more relaxed positions, conver-
 sation swells out, we start to scamper around and help to wheel in more
 round tables. Then everybody eats, and my father feels a deep sense
 of well-being.

805 Our lunar calendar has twelve months in its year, beginning the new
 year about the middle of April with the month of *Tagu*. Each month
 contains the twenty-nine to thirty days of the moon's cycle, but the dates
 are numbered with only 15 numbers—15 waxing days starting from the
 crescent of the new moon: *la-hsan ta-yet*, *la-hsan hna-yet*, new moon
 first day, second day and so on, until the 15th and full moon day, *la-pyit*
nay: after which come the waning days, *la-hsot*. With this system, we
 are 12 or 13 days short of the 365 each year, and hence every second year
 there occurs a double month of *Waso*, in July and August, which month
 also starts our Lent. Lent lasts the three months of the monsoon, until
Thadingyut, in October, when we see it out with lights, feasting and
 much merriment. For the observance of festivals such as New Year
 and Thadingyut we usually visited relatives, but certain other observances
 came round each year to us in our own home.

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 262 Such is *htamanè-hto*, the making of a comestible known as *htamanè*
 in vast quantities, for distribution on the first full moon after the harvest.
 On the full moon night of *Tabodwè* in January-February, the villagers
 sit up all night in big parties of men and women singing and joking as
 they make all preparations for the cooking that is to take place by dawn.
 The basis of *htamanè* is a glutinous rice called *kaukhmyin*, always

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associated with fresh country mornings, dew on the grass and smoke from the wood fire, men and women with cheroots and red striped blankets flung over them grouped around the fire. A favourite way of eating kaukhnyin is to put it with a little salt into a bamboo stick that has been cut with a notch to form a bottom, stop the top with a cork of paper and then roast it over a fire. By the time the stick is about to scorch, the rice is cooked and stuck together in a long tube held by a thin white skin from the inside of the bamboo. Cracked open and eaten with fried chicken it is delicious clean food; the best "kaukhnyin legs" and fried chicken were produced at Letpadan, in Tharawaddy district, for many years running. Other kaukhnyin eaters steam it with beans, pile it on lacquer trays and walk around to sell it in the early mornings about six o'clock, serving it on banana leaves, with sesamum salt and shredded coconut sprayed on top.

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But htamanè is made ceremonially only once a year. Work parties of women used to come to our house the day before and sit under the trees cutting coconut and ginger into thin slices, shelling peanuts, picking husks out of the kaukhnyin, and winnowing this and the sesamum in cane trays. At about four the next morning my mother and the rest of the household got up, and helped by one or two of the young men from other houses, they made fires under the trees, put the kaukhnyin in big pans, with oil and all the prepared ingredients, and cooked it for hours, taking turns to stir the sticky mixture all the time while the others sat around the fire smoking and talking. In the early morning we put the htamanè into dishes for the monasteries and all the houses in the neighbourhood, into tins for sending away to relatives in other towns, and store-jars for keeping in the house to eat between meals.

These accounts of our life in the districts are of ceremonies and celebrations so far because I was a child in those days. My parents had their own pattern of life with a background of work. My father, as I have said, belonged to the Burma Civil Service, Class II. The administrative services in Burma included three grades of Civil Services: the I.C.S., which became the Burma Civil Service I after separation from India, the B.C.S., which then became B.C.S. II, and the Subordinate Civil Service. These three services supplied the executive administrative officers who were placed in charge of the various-sized units of administration, helped in their government by judicial administrative officers of corresponding ranks, and by officers for police, forests, education, excise and other public services for which a separate recruitment was made.

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The myookship which my father obtained in 1912 was the most junior of these posts, usually filled by members of the Subordinate Civil

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245 and pink with juice; we shredded them in piles and ate them with prawn
 262 powder and fish sauce. The *kanaso*, the *baccaurea sapida*, gave us a
 824 fruit of a mouth-watering sweet-sourness. This fruit was said to induce diarrhoea and we were always made to eat the white piths which had a binding action.

262 Whereas we feasted on the fruits of trees, our elders turned to the sea for more fleshly succulence. My mother and aunts loved to get turtles' eggs, nastily soft white things the size of golf balls, boil them and tear them open to spill their richness on to a plate of boiled rice; they got oysters swimming soft and cold in vinegar; big nga-tha-lauk, hilsa fish, bursting with fatness, and thick buffalo's milk which always seemed to us more meaty and strong than cow's milk.

• 796 We came back to Ye itself for the New Year festival. The New
 772 Year in our lunar calendar usually occurs round about April 13th, and
 775 is the occasion of the descent of a spirit-king, the Tha-gya Min, king of the tha-gyas, from heavenly regions to the world of men. The Burman Buddhist idea of the universe places the hellish, the earthly and the heavenly regions in well-defined order. In the centre of the universe is Mount Myinmo, the highest peak in all the world, a million miles above the sea and a million below the waters. Round about the sides of this mountain are ranged the six levels of heavenly regions where the Dewas or heavenly spirits dwell. These heavenly spirits also have homes in the sun, moon and stars. Far up in the heavens, above the seats of the Dewas, are ranged the sixteen seats of more perfect beings, the Byammas, one above the other. And far above them, as high as the imagination can soar, are four sublime seats, on the borders of the supreme Nirvana. Below the six levels of the Dewa regions of Myinmo are seven ranges of mountains, girdling the earth in a perfect ring interposed only by seven seas. In these seas are set four great islands, to the north, south, east and west of Myinmo Mountain, each attended by five hundred small islands grouped around it. On each island grows a fabulous tree which gives its name to the island, and dwell beings whose heads are shaped like the shape of the island. The northern, eastern and western islands are all more fair than the southern, life lasts for five hundred or a thousand years, and the trees bear gorgeous dresses and delicious foods of meat, but the inhabitants of the southern islands are infinitely more blessed in their merit. This island of Zampudipa, shaped like a trapezium and bearing the Zampu tree, surrounded by five hundred islands where live the English and the other nations of the human world, is the abode of man, the Buddhist man, and the known neighbours who are heretics from Buddhism. Here the inhabitants must work to weave their clothes and cook their food and

live perhaps at the most a hundred years, but here also, and only here, do the Buddhas appear to teach the right way of living which is the only way in which the people can progress to the heavenly regions and to Nirvana. Down below the earth are situated the hells, eight great ones and forty thousand and forty smaller hells, regions of torture and punishment. 796^{*}
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Whereas the inhabitants of the northern, eastern and western islands around Myinmo, never hearing the words of a Buddha and never knowing the way of good and evil, are always born into the same world, never going up or down, man, the inhabitant of Zampudipa, may pass into the nethermost hell or the highest heavenly seat, according to the progress in his successive lives. Ascending the ladder from deep hells, through earth to heavenly regions, the spirit meets with existences which are not only more blessed in the degree of enjoyment and material happiness, but also correspondingly more free from fleshly desires and sin. Our Buddhist hells are the most frightening places one can imagine; as a child I used to look at the vivid pictures drawn in the friezes round pagoda building walls, to show the damnation that would befall the evil-doer who was born into a hell. Boiling in oil, flesh being torn off the bones by monstrous dogs and vultures, saws and knives aflame with red heat slowly dismembering limb from limb, all these occur in life in any of the hells. The next stage upwards from hell is a life as an animal, which a man may be born to for lesser sins and an omission from doing meritorious deeds. Animals have their stages of nobility also. Lowest are those living on excrements of flesh of other animals, nobler are the herbivorous animals and noblest of all the elephant. Gautama Buddha passed one of his existences as a white elephant, which is the reason for the esteem in which a white elephant was held—so high, that Buddhist kings longed to be able to style themselves, *Hsin-lyu Shin*, [413] Lord (Owner) of the white elephant. During his life as a man, a being had the opportunity to live a right life, observing the precepts, giving alms and attending the pagoda regularly. His next existence might then be as an inhabitant of one of the six seats of the Dewas. In all these six seats through which the being may progress, life is surrounded by delights of foods, clothing and dwelling, but passion is less sensual, and decreases with ascent. Successively, a touch of the hand, and then gazing at the lover, and finally the mere presence in the same existence is enough to satisfy love. From here, concentrated meditation will carry a being higher to the seats of the Byanmas; here he must get rid of all remaining affection for matter, for all parts of the body, until he attains to the four seats of Arups. The contempt for matter continues in these existences, and finally, when all false persuasions leave the spirit, he passes into Nirvana, the lifeless, timeless state of bliss, in which the

"Third he directs his attention to the knowledge of the destruction of the asavas". He duly understands, 'this is pain,' 'this is the cause of pain,' 'this is the cessation of pain,' 'this is the way leading to the cessation of pain.' He duly understands, 'these are the asavas,' 'this is the cause of the asavas,' 'this is the cessation of the asavas,' 'this is the way to the cessation of the asavas.' When he thus knows and thus perceives, his mind is released from the asava of lust, from the asava of (desire for) existence, from the asava of ignorance. In the released is the knowledge of his release; he understands that rebirth is destroyed, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is nothing further beyond this world." 772 779

At the New Year, then, the King of the tha-gyas, who are Dewas, comes to visit the earth which is suffering its hottest and driest month and looks to rain and coolness for deliverance. Before the descent each year, brahmans and astrologers get together and calculate the exact hour of his arrival, the means of his descent to the earth, whether astride a buffalo, a naga or a galon and whether he wields a spear or a water jar, for by these signs will the nature of the coming year be decided—heavy rains or drought, good crops or disturbances in the land—and the duration of his stay on the earth. All their findings are collected in leaflets which are distributed as the *tha-gyan sa*, and when I was young I used to think that they fell from heaven as prophetic messages. Actually the present day practice is to fix April 13th for the official occurrence of Thingyan each year. The celebration of the festival by pouring of water is to honour the heavenly visitor, to wash away the old year's dirtiness and to begin the new by good and auspicious deeds. 796 • 791

By the day before Tha-gya Min's arrival in Ye, the *a-kyo nay*, the preparing-to-greet day, bamboo palisades had been put up along the verandahs, arrangements had been made for communal celebration and large-scale washing and feeding. All the girls spent the morning grinding thanakha and other fragrant barks and the boys went out to cut the leaves of the *the-byay* tree for the sacred water pots to be poured out at the arrival of the visitor. In the evening, Grandmother and other old people walked up to the rest houses near the monastery where my father had been educated, for at their time of life, fasting, meditation and the contemplation of younger people's enjoyment is the happiest way of greeting the New Year. In the evening, too, we carried out Grandmother's good deed of inviting a number of people from the village to come and wash their hair. Hairwashing is part of the New Year's rituals because the noblest part of the body, the head, must be in a clean condition at this time. In the days of the Burmese kings, there

* Desires and impulses, expressions of the clinging to existence.

• 796 was a ceremonial washing of the King's hair at the New Year, called the *tha-gyan daw gyi*. The water was always brought from the clear springs of *Gaung-se kyun*, the island lying dark and green in the Moulmein river. The island had a special sanctity because it was believed to hang suspended from the heavens by an invisible cord. When the island passed into British territory after the first Burmese war, however, the waters of *Gaung-se kyun* were no longer used for this sacred purpose, and substitute clear water was got from the Irrawaddy.

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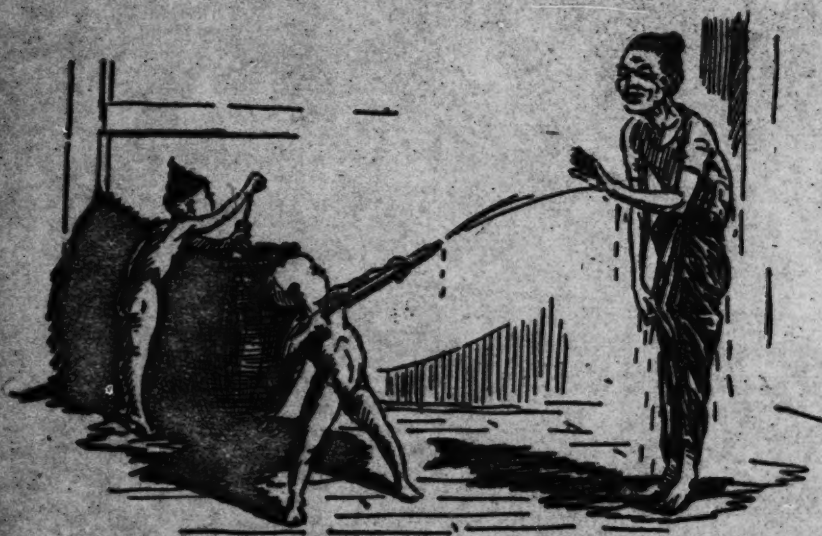
Burmese people wash their hair with the alkaline juices of the bark of a tree known as *tha-yaw*, combined with the seeds of the *accacia concina*. The bark, which is stored in a dried condition, is soaked for a few hours before washing, the *accacia* seeds are boiled in their pods until they are soft and are then crushed into the *tha-yaw* water. The result is a slippery mixture which we still use in preference to modern shampoos on the market. The provision of this in basins, and of clear water in big jars on our bamboo platform, was considered a meritorious act on New Year's eve. About twenty people came, bringing towels and a change of clothing. They washed their hair and bathed on the bamboo platform over the creek. The ladies put *thapakha* thickly on their cheeks and gave children blobs where the "roses" of English children's cheeks are, and we all sat on the edge of the platform, hair floating free in the breeze, and watched the sun go down. At night we helped to put the ground bark into little cups and stuck *tha-byay* leaves in the pots and went to bed full of pleasant anticipations. *Tha-gya Min* usually arrived about midnight, when Uncle Pyant got out his revolver and fired a salute to announce his arrival to the village. My male cousins stayed up to pour the water pots away, but we slept right through this actual arrival.

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Early next morning we woke up to find big tubs of water placed on the front verandah. Uncle Pyant gave each child a piston for squirting water, and there was terrific excitement as we chased about the house to greet each other with the first pouring of water. Our maids and dependents always affected great terror at the immodesty of being bathed by great splashes from my male cousins; they shrieked and clambered up ladders in a most unladylike fashion and tried to barricade themselves from the drenching. In the street, too, fun had begun already. Children of about eight years and below were all stripped naked and let loose with their pistons and tubs of water to run and soak each passer-by.

But in the kitchens of the houses aunts and mothers were busy dishing out the morning meal to be sent up to the *zayat* where grandmothers keeping the fast would eat only this one meal of the day. My cousin Ma Aye Shwe and the dependent girls put on their brightest clothes of washable materials and set the trays on their heads. All the

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houses did likewise and the procession collected more girls as it passed each house on its way towards the zayats. Behind the girls, the young lads of the village followed with empty tins and buckets, to go and draw water with which to bathe the images of the Buddha, and then the bathwater for the old folk in the zayat. The procession always looked very gay, for the girls wore stout bright cotton prints instead of the usual white muslin jackets, so that the wet clinging clothes after a splashing would not make immodest figures of them. As this procession passed, not even the naughtiest urchin would dare to splash them as long as they headed in the direction of the monastery. Arrived at their destination, the young people served the meal to the elders, drew the water and washed the images, filled the jars with bathwater for their grandmothers, ate their own meal from the pooled remains of what they had brought, and then started uproarious fun. The young men had the advantage of their buckets, but the girls had the advantage of being able to use guile by affecting fear and helplessness until they could turn the buckets round on their pursuers. After this they went in search of the ngu branches, the equivalent, in Ye, of the podan flowers which boys and girls in other parts of Burma were plucking.

The podan is the *pterocarpus indica*, a tall tree growing in the mixed dry forests of Burma and giving a rich red wood which is much used in the making of bullock carts. It is also a beautiful flowering tree, whose bright yellow blossoms are always associated with the freshness of the New Year festivities, for it flowers at this time and its branches are cut down and dragged into houses with drops of water lighting up the golden

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• 796 yellow flowers against the rich dark green leaves, either water from the
137 water throwers or the *tha-gyan mo*, the thingyan showers. Light showers
132 usually fall about this time although the monsoon is far off yet; they come
821 from a small low pressure area over the land although when we were
young it seemed to be part of what the true *tha-gyan sa* leaflets should
promise, a foretaste of the coolness of the real monsoon, and a recognition
of *Tha-gya Min's* presence. If the rain was late in falling, the
villagers set to work to hurry it on. The rain spirits live in the stars
but they sometimes come out to play with each other in the space of the
firmament. Then rain falls on the earth. But at other times, when the
sun is not in the right quarter, they stay indoors and the earth receives
only the scorching heat of the sun. Men can then rouse the rain spirits
to show more energy and come out, by the beating of tin cans and by
exerting energy themselves in a tug-of-war. In *Ye*, the upper street
and the lower street used to put up teams for this and tugging was
carried on amidst betting and cheering and the beating of empty
kerosene tins by women and children around.

796 The girls and youths from the monastery returned at about noon,
262 wet and happy and dragging the branches of *ngu* along. Throughout the
day the children ran into the street to pour water on passers-by; bullock
carts went by, decorated with *ngu* branches and holding music and
water parties of young men and girls, the young men richly painted and
dancing in the open carts; rival teams drew up and staged water-fights
in the street or went to besiege houses where beautiful girls with a repu-
tation for coldness or coyness were hiding. Throughout the day, also,
dishes of sweetmeats arrived, for each house does the good act of making
a comestible in large quantities for distribution. Ours was made on the
second day and was a Moulmein speciality for which my mother had the
best talent. This *tha-gyan hta-min*, thingyan rice, sounds insipid when
described as boiled rice, eaten floating in cold water which has been made
fragrant, to the accompaniment of green mango salad and saltfish
shredded and fried crisp. To us, of course, it is delicious. The water
has received an infusion of the aroma from an earthen pot which is
turned upside down over the burning of tallow and fragrant woods. The
rice is not the moist steamy rice of meal times but has been drained after
cooking, on tray-sieves of cane, and the grains lie clear and separate and
whole. The delight of eating thingyan rice in the hot weather is in-
describable to foreigners, perhaps even to all non-Moulmein people,
eating it in wide china bowls, with china spoons, alternating the concen-
tration of sour and salt tastes of mango and saltfish with the coolness and
cleanness of the rice and its water. We could eat this throughout the
day; being thingyan rice it carried a blessedness which made us immune

to stomach ache, in the same way as it would be graceless to think that one could catch cold from the playing of thingyan water. 796*
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During the three days of the festival communal celebrations were also carried on, with shows and free feasting every night at pandals put up by each section of the streets. By the *a-tetnay*, rising day, when the Tha-gya Min goes back to the heavenly regions, everyone was a bit worn out, but the more energetic spirits declared that Tha-gya Min had forgotten his pipe or umbrella and had come back for one day more to fetch it. People try not to tell lies, quarrel, swear or lose their tempers during the days of the New Year. Apart from the offence it would give to the ears of the heavenly visitor in the vicinity it was considered a bad omen to begin the new year with such wicked behaviour. Children were always warned not to be disobedient in case the Tha-gya Min should note it, but the reason was also that the grown-ups should not be forced to scold them during this period. Woe to the servant maid who blunders then; greater woe indeed for her sin in causing the mistress to scold her and use angry words. 796
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The years saw little change in the social programme of our visits to Ye, but in the absence of social changes, the human element always seemed more strong and primitive, and all the drama and romance of which we had so little in our placid district houses was concentrated in Ye. Life there seemed more full of physical movement and danger, anger was more strong, love more sweeping, quarrels more deep and lasting than we were used to. Births, deaths, disease and elopements all seemed to happen more frequently. It was all terror, excitement and romance to us. 000

A robbery at any of the houses in the village woke the whole quarter up, house by house, as the screams from there were taken up by frightened neighbours. My male cousins and all the men of the village hitched their longyis up around their loins, ran hither and thither in the night, with lanterns in one hand and dahs in the other. The women-folk, as soon as the men had rushed out to the rescue, barricaded their doors and collected together in a whispering group, lest the fleeing robber should dodge into an open doorway in the shuttered line and demand silence and shelter at the point of his dah. On these occasions when we huddled together already terror-stricken, my grandmother recounted her story of the time when she failed to shut her door in time, and the robber was in the shadow of it as she went forward to fold it. "Not a word," he said, showing his blade. "Look out and see which way they have gone. Are they there? How many? Is the street clear? Don't talk loud." In this way Grandmother helped the felon to escape. Once or twice during the day we saw a saung, a blanket 674

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in English : "Maung Sett Khaing and Khin Khin Su, I pronounce you 585
man and wife."

All this was a solemn affair; there were no music, no speeches, no outsiders, and no photographs; but by the end of the ceremony murmurs of the activity in the garden floated in. There, a tea party such as the song recounts was being arranged, with an orchestra, Indian waiters, photographers and young men in bright longyis to usher the guests around. After the tea, the wedding guests went to see not so much the presents which were laid out on tables, but the bridal chamber, fitted with richest trappings, and guarded against male intrusion by a gold thread across the door, to break across which the men must pay in gold. All the guests now streamed into this chamber, the women peering here and there, lifting the coverlet of the bed to see if the traditional blankets of velvet were present, prodding the softness of the mattress, estimating the taste of the bride in the choice of fine linen and lace hangings. The custom is for the pair to spend their first days in this chamber in the house of the bride's family, before they go to live in their own house.

Different though the life in Rangoon was from the days in the dis- [369]
tricts, our Buddhist festivals still came round for social gathering and 796 ●
celebration. Being a big town, however, with electricity, crowded streets and cars, the celebrations tended to stand out more as night celebrations. Pagoda festivals at any of the pagodas in the suburbs drew a procession of cars and buses to the night bazaars, anyeins, and the light points twinkling out of the surrounding blackness. But these twinkling lights were multiplied a thousandfold at the lighting-up festivals of which we had two. Thadingyut, or the release from Lenten sobriety, ushers in the springtime of the year: now may all weddings, shinbyus and ear-borings take place, now may fasting days decrease and the full moons of lighting and harvesting and the new year water-play follow before another Lent; the deluge of the rains has ceased at last, the sky has been washed blue and the air blows cool and gentle. At Thadingyut, all houses light up their verandahs and gardens; streets of houses put up pavilions and offer food and stage shows to all the townspeople who ride along in cars, trams and rickshaws to look at the lights from end to end of the town.

During my last Thadingyut in Burma we had a happier idea. Leaving our house with a nominal number of oil-flame dishes burning, we went in a party of twelve to the hill of the Shwe Dagon, to light there one thousand candles as our magnificent deed of merit. We walked up the western approach, a covered way of pillars and stalls selling fragrant flowers, incense sticks and candles for offering; barefooted up steps which we came to sweep at other times in the belief that this good deed brings the deer beauty of long and black hair in the next existence. From a

796 number of stalls we bought our thousand candles—thin white candles made for us and for export, in the Syriam refinery across the river, from the petroleum of Burma's oilfields. Our arms laden with these packets we emerged on to the open, marble-paved platform from which the Shwe Dagon rose, surrounded by images, miniature pagodas and shrines in an encircling row. Along the circumference of the paved platform were big trees and resthouses where people kept sabbath, or reclined during a quiet day of eating and meditation. We chose a spot free from other worshippers and said our prayers. Then we began the lighting; each of us on a space two feet long, taking fire from the neighbouring lights of other offerings for the first candles, setting them down on the stone ledge encircling the shrines, and fixing the bases of row upon row from the fire of the beacon candle, until they overflowed on to the marble floor. How pretty they looked, those straight white unlit sticks, so regular in the dim light. Then we took a torch candle and used it as a taper, touching each stick into life; but the struggle of it, with the wind blowing so high on the hill, and a strong gust knocking down the infirm ones, and other candles lighting quicker than one's own, and the young children poaching on each other's rows and stealing fire, exciting us all as one after another each act of merit twinkled into light, until the last rows were done in time to have all thousand candles burning together in a beautiful bright offering.

The Thadingyut moon, on waning, was followed by the Tasaungmon, and when that moon grew full, the town was lighted up again. This time it was to commemorate the return of Gautama from his visit to Tawadeintha, the region of heavenly spirits into which his mother Maia had been reincarnated after her death on this earth. When I was very young we had a lesson about how, after attaining enlightenment, the Blessed One wished that his mother could hear the wisdom which he now possessed, how he journeyed up the Tawadeintha Mount to preach to her, and how, on his return, the monks and holy men of that region lighted his descent back to earth, holding tapers out of the gloom in two rows, on either side of him. As a child I dreamt of this as a wondrous vision; I pictured the space between the two worlds as black as only a void can be; not to be crossed by any means except the divine or the celestial, and I pictured the glowing tapers making a continuous ray of gold across this deep blackness, lighting up the yellow robes of the Holy Order and the face of the Buddha in its beatitude.

But the lighting up at Tasaungdaing is all tinsel and glitter; in Rangoon it was done with much more festivity than at Thadingyut. In the University every Buddhist student subscribed towards lighting up in rivalry between halls—lanterns and oil-flame dishes were arrayed along

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all verandahs, trees, window-sills and gateways, the facade of the hall bearing a giant lantern in the shape of the Buddha. In the town the gayest display was put on by the trader residents of Gold Mountain and Goods Bazaar Rows. These people who cared not for races, garden tea parties nor fashionable weddings, put all their zest into the Tasaungdaing celebration. Each entrance to the streets was spanned with arch and pavilion, and between the two ends were contained lights, feeding at each house, a stage show, arrays of presents which were being offered to monasteries, and a jostling mass of people from all parts of the town. Among all the glitter moved the daughters of the houses, also on display; their breasts sparkling with the full stock of jewellery, the diamond spangles in their hair trembling in scintillation like the quivering balls of silver and tinsel on the decorations around them. 716

All this tinsel and glitter, sparkle and glistening tintillation reached its crowning point, only to be shown as vanity, fantasy, in the spectacle put forth at the cremation of a revered hpongyi—one whose life on the earth was all austerity and solidness of the worth of gold. A monk dies and is embalmed in honey and put to lie in state for perhaps a year, while the *lu*, ordinary humans, prepare for the cremation that is to send him off on his return flight to higher states of existence. He whose life has been lived in accordance with the belief that all earthly things, all ornament and pleasures of the earth, are illusion, impermanence and struggle, now has his exit prepared for by weaker mortals who build and decorate a seven-tiered pavilion for his pyre; and fantastic mammoth creatures to flank it high in the sky—giant birds, tigers and elephants, high on the slopes of Shwe Dagon Hill, tall and gigantic, but empty within, of inflammable bamboo and paper, caparisoned with gaudy, floating trimmings. Under the vast shadows of these empty creatures gay pavilions for feeding and the sale of bright wares are put up, lights are festooned for a night bazaar. When the day dawns for the burning, crowds throng to the fair, in merriment because the monk who so long ago renounced his attachment to human affections leaves no grieving widow and children; the coffin is lifted into its tiered catafalque and laid on a bed of inflammable tinder; it is drawn to the centre of the giant animals. When the feasting, buying and jostling have had their run, word passes round that the final moment is about to take place; people are drawn towards the canopy; the masters of ceremony throw rockets and torches into the decked bier; four, five and suddenly a hundred tongues of fire lick the bamboo, paper and the bed of tinder, and a magnificent blaze rises into the sky. Soon other torches set aflame the row of animals, and elephants, tigers, boats and birds go up in smoke, together with canopy, bier and coffin, leaving no traces of the saintly body. Excitement abates, the 746 793

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In recognition of this new-gained power the novice drops
his secular name and receives a bwè, an honorific title, to
mark that it is now open to him to escape from suffering.
The name lapses when he returns to the world again, but it
is sufficient that he has once borne it. He may now add to
his kan, merit, and gain for himself a glorious new life by
good works.

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This is what is meant by calling the ceremony a baptism.
The bwè are almost invariably Pali, or Burmanised Pali
names, and follow the same rules with regard to initial
letters as the lu nāmé. Thus a Maung Po Myat, born on
Thursday, might take the name of Pyinya-Zawta, while
the bwè of a Sunday child, Maung An, would be Adesa.
This religious or Buddhist (on the analogy of Christian)
name is, of course, retained by the regular members of the
monastery, and a monk is never addressed by any other
when a name is used at all. When he becomes old a U
is added, as U Adesa, but it must not be forgotten that
the use of a person's name in addressing him is considered
very far from being polite in Burma, especially to one of
rank and dignity such as a mendicant. On the other hand,
one who has returned to the world never uses the bwè, not
even when he accomplishes some great religious work such
as the foundation of a pagoda, which according to a com-
forting belief ensures passage to Ne'ban after death.

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The entry into the monastic order is therefore certainly
the most important event in the life of a Burman, since only
under the robe of the recluse and in the abandonment of the
world can he completely fulfil the law and hope to find the
way to eventual deliverance from the misery of ever-recur-
ring existences. The popular time for the ceremony is just
at the beginning of Wā, the Buddhist Lent, which lasts
from July to October, roughly speaking. Strict Buddhists
make their sons stay throughout the whole Wā. During
that season feasts, though they do occur, are very much dis-
countenanced, and dramatic performances are energetically
denounced by the religious.

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According to the letter of the law the intending proba-
tioners should have reached the age of fifteen, but this
regulation has almost entirely lapsed in Lower Burma,
among other reasons chiefly because that is just the most

important age for the boy to be learning English and arithmetic, with a view to getting situations under Government or in English merchants' offices. Therefore in the vast majority of cases shin-pyu thi takes place at the age of twelve, or perhaps even a year earlier.

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If the boy has been a scholar in the monastery beforehand, he is sure to be already prepared in all that is required of him. If not, he gets a few hasty lessons in the duties that will be incumbent on him. He must address a full member of the order in such and such language; he must walk decorously through the streets, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground six feet before him, and on no account gaze round him, no matter what exciting events may be going on; he must wear his *thingan* and *du-gut* in the prescribed fashion; he must eat with dignity and circumspection, and so on. All these details are set forth in most minute fashion in a code. When he has mastered the most essential portions, and has also given proof of an acquaintance with the ordinary forms of worship, all is ready. His horoscope now comes into requisition, and a *bedinsayā* or *Ponna* is called in to determine a lucky day and hour from the *sadā*. When this has been settled, three or four girls, the intending *koyin-gale's* sisters, or friends of the family, dress themselves up in their finest silks and jewels—often borrowing a large quantity of the latter—and go round the town, announcing to all relatives, friends, and neighbours when the induction will take place, and inviting them to the feast, presenting the little packet of *le'-pet* usual on such occasions. Almost all of these send some little present, either of money or victuals, to aid in the feast and make it as grand as possible. Not unseldom, if somebody else's son is also going to enter the *kyaung* and the town is not very large, the two join forces, while occasionally as many as half a dozen unite, especially if the families are not well off.

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On the appointed day the young neophyte dresses in his finest clothes, and loads himself with all the family gold chains and jewellery, and as much more as he can borrow for the occasion. He then mounts a pony or gets into a richly decorated car. Shaded by gold umbrellas, allowed formerly on this occasion only in Upper Burma, except to those who had got a special patent for them from the sovereign...

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had got a special patent for them from the sovereign, he passes at a foot-pace through the village. A band of music goes before; all his friends and relatives crowd round him decked in their gayest; the young men dancing and singing vigorously; the girls laughing and smiling, with powdered faces and brilliant dresses. Thus he goes in succession to the houses of his relations and of all the local officials, to do them the obeisance due from a younger member of the family, and to bid them farewell. They in turn contribute money towards the expense of the band, and the solace of the supernumeraries. This triumphant march is meant to symbolise the maung-shin's abandonment of the follies of this world, and to recall Prince Theidat's last splendid appearance in Kapilawut, amidst a crowd of rejoicing clansmen and subjects, just previous to his abandonment of family and kingdom to become a homeless mendicant ascetic, and to obtain the Buddhahood under the bawdi tree. When the round of visits has been duly carried out, the procession turns back to the parents' house, where in the meantime the final preparations for the induction and subsequent feast have been concluded. The head of the kyaung to which the young postulants are to be admitted, together with several of his brother monks, are seated at the back of the room on a raised dais, in front of which are ranged the presents intended for the mendicants—heaps of fruit, cooked food, mats, yellow cloth, and so on. The "Talapoins" seated in a row carefully hold up the large lotus-leaf-shaped fans before their faces to shut out from view the female portion of the assemblage. Never is the command to the holy community not to look on woman more necessary and more arduous to observe than at a shin-pyu pwè. Burma's fairest daughters are assembled, bright in rainbow skirts and neckerchiefs; drowsy-scented flowers in the jetty tresses, jewellery flashing on the bosom, the fingers, and ears, the fragrance of thana'ka lingering over the smiling faces. Terrible trial it is for the young monk, if any such there be in the gaing ôk's following, and more imperative the concentration of the mind on the Payeit Gyi and other portions of the sacred writ which are loudly chanted as the postulants return, and the assembly shikhoes to the pon-

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gyis, and settles down to observe the proceedings. The boy throws off all his fine clothes and jewellery, and binds a piece of white cloth round his loins. Then his long hair is cut off close to the head. Often the locks are as much as three or four feet long, and are carefully preserved by the mother or sister, the latter often making them up into ta-su, the tails of hair twisted in with her own to increase the size of her sa-dôn—the knot of hair she wears at the back of her head. When the hair has been cut, the head is carefully shaved, the boy holding it over a cloth held by some of his relations. After this the head is washed in the usual way with a decoction of the seeds and bark of the kin-bôn thi, and rubbed well with saffron. A bath is then taken, and once more he puts on the bright paso, and repairs to the presence of the monks. Near at hand the parents have set ready the thingan, belt, ko-wut, and other yellow robes, the begging-pot and other requisites of the shin. The boy comes forward, prostrates himself three times, raises his hands joined in reverence, and begs, in a Pali formula got up by heart, to be admitted to the Holy Assembly as a neophyte, that he may walk steadily in the path of perfection, enjoy the advantages which result therefrom, and finally attain to the blessed state of Ne'ban. The kyaung po-go with his own hands gives him the garments; he is duly robed; the thabeit is hung round his neck by the strap, and then it is announced formally that he is a member of the monastery. He falls in among the other novices who have come with the mendicants. The abbot perhaps exhorts the assemblage for a short time, and then rising while all the people do obeisance, walks off slowly to the monastery, whither the newly-appointed ko-yins follow him, not unlikely helping to carry the presents which have been given at their induction.

The feast at the parents' house begins immediately, and of course ends in a pwè, which lasts till dawn. Sometimes, though this is very seldom the case even in Rangoon, the young probationer comes back again the same night and assumes the lay dress. This *pro forma* observance of the ceremony of baptism is, however, vehemently opposed by all the monks who are worth anything. A few boys

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remain only twenty-four hours in the yellow dress, long enough to enable them to go once at least round the village begging from door to door in the train of the yahans. This, naturally, is very little better than leaving the kyaung immediately. It is considered hardly decent for the shin to leave under seven days of professed membership of the community. Some stay longer—a fortnight, a month, or two months; but all the more earnest believers insist that their sons shall remain at least one Wā, throughout the four months of Lent, in the rainy season. The best course for a fervent Buddhist, who nevertheless does not feel himself, adapted for a monkish life, is to stay over three Wās, one Lent for his father, one for his mother, and one for himself. It is on account of the importance of the Wā to the shin-pyu that most inductions take place at the beginning of that season. Yahans count their seniority by the number of Lents they have spent in the kyaung. A mendicant of twenty Wās must shekho to one of twenty-five, and so on. An individual who has left the holy community to re-enter the world is called a lu-twet, a runaway. On the other hand, a man who has been married, and has afterwards entered the monastery, goes by the name of taw-twet, one who has fled from the jungle of the world. The most revered yahans are those who have held steadfastly by the blameless, austere life of the fraternity since the time when they were first admitted as koyin-gale. Such are called ngè-byu, white, or stainless from youth, and if they attain to advanced age are always sure of a most splendid ceremonial funeral, whether they have been celebrated for piety and learning or not.

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If the shin-pyu stays on in the kyaung, he continues the same course of studies as he began as a scholar. If he has not already learnt the Payeit Gyi and the Paya Shikho, Pali sermons and forms of worship, or the Mingala Thut, the "Buddhist Beatitudes," he applies himself to them now. The most advanced pore over the metaphysical mysteries of the Abhidhamma Konit-gyan, the seven books, of the most difficult part of the Bitaghat. These, with the Thingyo and Thadda, afford ample room for consideration to the longest life. The modern system of shortened sojourn in the

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indeed in any monastery at all, even in Mandalay, it would be promptly put a stop to. But where the monks themselves show the example of carnal weakness, the probationers cannot be expected to maintain the old austerity.

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The shin is subject in every way to the discipline of the monastery, but there are very few additional rules really incumbent on him. He has to observe always the Sè-ba Thila, the ten commandments. Five of these are obligatory on all Buddhists at all times: the other five are supposed to be incumbent upon laymen only on sacred days and during Lent. The five universal commandments are:—

1. Thou shalt not take any life at all.
2. Thou shalt not steal.
3. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
4. Thou shalt not lie.
5. Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquor.

The additional five are:

6. Thou shalt not eat after mid-day.
7. Thou shalt not sing, dance, or play on any musical instrument.
8. Thou shalt not use cosmetics, or colour the face.
9. Thou shalt not sit, stand, or sleep on platforms or elevated places not proper for thee.
10. Thou shalt not touch gold or silver.

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These latter five are, it has been said, imposed upon laymen on sacred days, but the burden is very light, the people observing them or not, accordingly as they are observing the "duty-day." If they are not "keeping the feast," they conduct themselves precisely as they would on any other day, and buy and sell and attend pwès in their ordinary fashion.

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This laxity is, of course, not open to the shins, but it cannot be said that the regulations, except perhaps as to eating, are very irksome. The seventh and eighth commandments seem by themselves peculiar, but they refer to filthy habits more explicitly set forth in the Patimauk, or book of the enfranchisement, containing the 227 sins which

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The casting of a brass image is a public festival, and the scene of general rejoicing. The people gather from miles round about, and there are plays and feastings for several nights, whether the Buddha is presented by an individual or by public subscription. The whole assemblage takes an interest in the proceedings, and rejoices in proportion to the success of the casting, which is effected in the same way as with bells. When the image is finished and ready to be dedicated, a great procession is formed; a band of music and dancers go at the head; the most wealthy men deem it an honour to be allowed to bear a hand in carrying the statue; men, women, and children from all the surrounding country, dressed in their gayest clothes, follow on foot or in brightly decorated bullock-carts to the bottom of the pagoda steps. Then the Buddha is carried up and solemnly deposited in the allotted place, *myatta-thappè*, in religious phraseology, a term not to be rendered without many words in English. It includes all the meanings of seemliness, dignity, beauty, splendour, and awe-compelling majesty. The ritual of the monks at the consecration of an image is, as in the case of the dedication of a pagoda, vague, and decided by individual opinion. Such a formal presentation service is called *Nekaza*, and is declared by the *Sulagandi* sect to be superfluous. The lineaments of the Budh are worthy of honour wherever seen, at the pagoda or in the workman's shop.

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The figures of Shin Gautama are not in themselves by any means handsome as works of art. The national skill in wood-carving is well known, and the little wooden lay figures made at *Henzada* and other places are remarkably clever in their variety of expression. None of this skill appears in the religious images. The modeller or sculptor is held fast by ancient custom. He must make his image of a particular pattern and with the recognised expression. The object is to portray the death of all human passions and earthly feelings. The calm, eternal sleep-like smile symbolises the attainment of *ne'ban*, the cessation of being, the end of the cycles of transincorporation of souls. This is all that is intended to be represented, and it is held out as a hope to the struggling sinner among earthly miseries.

The model to be followed would be worthless did the face
express the hopes and fears and pleasures of wretched
mortality.

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The following triumphal song is taken from the same
play of Sawpé Sawmé as the chant in celebration of the
gilding of the Pegu pagoda, and is set to the same Yoddaya
nan-thein than. The Mahā Myat Muni is the "Arakan
Pagoda" in Mandalay.

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ON THE IMAGE PRESENTED BY THE PEGU INSPECTOR
TO THE MAHĀ MYAT-MUNI

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Fair springs the sun at dawning
From out the forest's green,
The nine gems on his nat-front
Shine gloriously at e'en.

The rainbow weaves nat-raiment,
Sweet is the lily's breath,
The malla flower is winsome,
That weeps the Saddan's¹ death.

But fairer is the image
That Hanthawadi sends,
Amid its gold and silver
The pearl with ruby blends.

The maiden from her finger
Drew off her jewelled rings,
The men brought costly diamonds
And wealth of precious things,

And as 'mid shouts and clangour
The flames leapt red as gold
All joyous cast their treasures
Into the hissing mould.

So high hath Buddha honour
In Hanthawadi's soil,
So gladly seek believers
Release from earthly toil.

¹ The Saddan is the White Elephant, the last incarnation of Shīa Gautama
before he was conceived in Queen Maia's womb.

CHAPTER XIX

A PAGODA FEAST

A PAGODA feast in Burma is one of the most frequent, as well as one of the most picturesque sights in the country. Each shrine has its own special sacred day; and the annual celebration of it is made the occasion of a general picnic, the congregation of people, from all parts of the surrounding districts, being bent no less on pleasure than on pious observances. Reverence for the shrines of various saints in different parts of Europe gave rise to the great fairs which were general until the end of last century, and survive even now in out-of-the-way places. Doubtless, if the Burmese were a commercial people, and cared for the putting together of pieces of silver, these gatherings might degenerate into occasions of barter and bickerings of trade—just as, if they were a practical people, their zat-pwè might blossom into something of a more real character, as the old mystery and morality plays gave birth to the modern drama of Europe. But the Burmese do not care for any of these things; and the pagoda festivals retain therefore the character they have always had, of ostensible religious assemblies. Still their most obvious characteristic to the ordinary public mind is very different. Youths and girls look forward to them as seasons of mirth and flirtation: long nights at the open-air theatre, feasting and perpetual amusements, the pleasanter because lasting no more than a couple of days. Elderly people have no less liking for them. They meet their old friends, and receive and recount the gossip of half a dozen districts; and there is always a succession of new acquaintances. It is a joyous holiday; and it is sanctified by the

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527 thought that the few hours spent at the payā gather up stores of kutho, not less certainly profitable than the social delights of the "duty day" are pleasurable.

● 796 The greatest of all the pagoda feasts is, of course, that
101 of the Shwe Dagôn in Rangoon, with its pilgrims, not only from the farthest parts of Burma and far-away Shan hills, but also from over the seas, from Siam and Cambodia and the Corea. But the vastness of the gathering and the proximity of the great town spoil the national character of the festival, and introduce too many elements of nineteenth-century civilisation in the shape of merry-go-rounds and hack carriages. A "jungle" feast is not only more characteristic, but more appreciated in its way by both town and country folk.

796 There are three old Talaing pagodas near Rangoon, Kyaik-ka-san, Kyaik-ka-lo, and Kyaik-waing, whose annual duty days are looked forward to with pleasure by all the people round about. The feasts all occur in the month of Tabodwè, corresponding to our February or March. I have a suspicion that, were the proper date adhered to, all three would have the same uboné; but such a lavish squandering of the good a popular religion provides for us would hardly meet with lay approval, even if advocated by the most holy of hermits. Accordingly the three pagoda days occur at intervals of a week, without reference to the crescent or waning moon; and latterly, with singular convenience for Burmans occupied in business in Rangoon, have usually been fixed, for Sunday; so that English merchants are not troubled with the sudden ailments of their clerks at this season so much as used formerly to be the case. The Kyaik-ka-san is probably the most sacred of the three; containing as it does a tooth and bone of the forehead of Shin Gautama, brought to Rangoon by a yahanda, a blameless mendicant, over whose remains in Rangoon a huge thein-gyi, or ceremonial building, has been erected. Kyaik-ka-lo is, however, seemingly the more popular. It stands on the summit of a little hill about fourteen miles north of Rangoon, and is built of laterite blocks, now faced with bricks covered with plaster. The shrine was built in the second century before Christ, and,

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ninety feet high itself, is surrounded by twenty-four smaller zediyan of a much later date.

Great crowds of people go out every year from Rangoon, starting early in the morning, so as to avoid the heat, though in February the bracing winds of the cold weather have not altogether gone. Most of the travelling is done in bullock-carts. These conveyances are not nearly so fine as the Mandalay vehicles, but they are neat enough; the pole is elaborately carved at the end, and above all they are roomy, and allow "Jack Burma" and his family to loll about as they please. Bamboos are bent over to form a hood, and over this is thrown a kullagā, a piece of tapestry-work formed of pieces of many-coloured cloth sewn on to a red blanket so-as to represent figures; the scenes being usually taken from some well-known play or from the court. They are eight or ten feet long, and four or five broad, affording a capital shelter from the sun, and combining the advantage of being easily moved when there is a breeze, with the still greater merit of looking very gay and bright. The party starts off before daylight, young master Lugalé being left behind to guard the house till the rest come back, and testifying his disapproval of the responsibility of this duty by strenuous bowls. The Madrasi sepoy lines are soon passed, and we get out into the undulating country beyond, and pass through the gardens and orchards which abound along the Prome road. The ground here is not suited for rice, and there are large areas covered with mango, jack, ma-yan, a kind of acid plum (which the perverse Englishman persists in calling Mary-Anne), and other fruit-trees, with pine-apples in long rows beneath their shade. The Chinese have great market-gardens here, miracles of neatness, but far from savoury in their odours. They never miss a chance of making money, and accordingly this morning turn over a few pice by selling sugar-cane to the girls, and bamboo pipes of palm-toddy to the men. The Shans, also born gardeners, to whom the fruit-trees mostly belong, are very pious, and join in the pilgrimage with their quaint offering-flags made of slim frameworks of bamboo, woven across in diverse patterns with vari-coloured cotton threads. A little farther on we get beyond the region of the market-gardens, and

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pass between monotonous stretches of secondary jungle with no houses to be seen, though behind the strip of tangled bush there are wide expanses of rice-land with little bamboo huts dotted here and there in clusters. But the sun is getting high, and about half-way on the journey old Maung Gyi declares he is hungry, and draws up the cart under a bank in a shady hollow. The bullocks are turned loose, and preparations made for breakfast. The entire house service has been brought with us. It is not very extensive, certainly. A couple of earthen pots with covers, and a flat wooden spoon to stir up the rice or curry; a ladle made of half a cocoa-nut, with a handle in it; a big round flat dish of plain lacquered wood to place the entire feast on when it is ready; and a few bamboo, lacquered cups, without handles, with perhaps a plate or two, complete the list. The provender is equally simple. A heap of plain boiled rice, dried fish, chillies, onions, nga-pi, some salt and oil—that is the sum total. But it is eaten with zest and good appetite, and the little stream furnishes wherewith to wash it down. Then the ladies produce cheroots for the party from the recesses of their bamboo plaited paks, and light up for everybody if they are good-natured.

Numbers of other carts have come up and stopped or passed on in the meantime, and, hilarious with his breakfast, Maung Gyi challenges neighbour U Hpe to a race; and forthwith the bullocks are brought into a shambling trot, and amidst much prodding with sticks and cries of "Hé noa" and "Tun-n-ng," and other sounds understood of cattle, a fairly level race is kept up for half a mile or so. Then the carts are pulled up, and their inmates burst into loud talk, having been hitherto precluded from expressing their triumph or chagrin from a fear of biting their tongues off in the jolting, or of being choked with the dust. Notes are compared as to who is coming and who has stayed away, and then fresh acquaintances are sighted in the passing throng; and so with much good humour and pleasant meetings the fourteen-mile journey is safely got over. Arrived at the zayat, the rest-house, which marks the point whence the path to the shrine strikes off from the highway, the cart is turned aside among the low bushes; the oxen

are cast off and tethered up, the mats and bedding spread out below the cart in readiness against bed-time. Then our party breaks up to seek friends in the crowd; the girls taking off their travelling-dress and putting on their finest tameins, an operation which it would puzzle English women to do in public with equally scanty raiment and equal modesty. But they do it deftly; and, after touching up their complexion with a little fragrant thana'kha, are off, followed shortly by their brothers, who, in the absence of a looking-glass, have some difficulty in winding on their turbans to their liking. However, that is eventually done, and the remaining hours of daylight are spent in pleasant talk with friends, and wanderings through the shrub-growth and tall grass which cover the spur, at the end of which is the pagoda. The little tank, a brick-built pond, which lies at the foot of the hollow, falling away from the monastery, is a great rendezvous, and many of the older people climb the slope to have some talk with the abbot.

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At nightfall there is a general gathering in the cleared space where the stage for the puppet-play is erected. The monks of the kyaung are not Sulagandis, and do not prohibit the acting of a play so near to the sacred precincts. Besides, it is the Wethandaya Wuttu, one of the ten greatest birth-stories; and there is a troupe of famous manipulators from Rangoon. The marionette play is more esteemed by the people than the legitimate drama, and it is more suited to the neighbourhood of the relic-shrine. Nevertheless, a zat-pwè, got up by the amateur actors and actresses of the village of San-gyi-wa, a mile back on the road, is also well patronised, so that all tastes are consulted.

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The people sit round about in a dense crowd, smoking and chewing betel, many of the young men strolling about and flirting in the impromptu bazaar which some business-like girls have started. This goes on till daylight, the audience alternately sleeping and looking on and applauding. At early dawn, the offerings are made to the yahans, and all crowd to the shrine to recite their sentences in praise of the Lord Buddha. After breakfast there is more gossip and conversation with friends. A few of the old people listen to the reading and expounding of the Law by

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the superior of the monastery, but the young continue the amusements of the day before. The cool of the evening, or the following morning at latest, sees all on their way home again, the fun being kept up with, if anything, increased zest. Every one is in high spirits. There has been much merit gained by the pilgrimage, and the personal enjoyment of the trip has been no less satisfactory. Gay turbans are hung up as flags from the carts, and songs and choruses are frequent and jovial. Many a marriage is settled at these pious picnics. There is such abundant opportunity for love-making at the open-air encampment, where the old people are so engaged in talking with relations and friends whom they have not seen for the last twelve months, that they forget how craftily they utilised similar opportunities when they were young themselves. Besides, at the end of February, Lent is beginning to loom up, and in Lent nobody can be married, and those girls who do not care for the watery courtship of the New Year's Feast in April are often induced to be complaisant at the country pagoda feasts. Many a young couple have special cause to remember the happy ride back. The Buddhist faith may be as dreary, without hope, without belief in the world, as many say it is, but no one would imagine it so who looks on the gaily-dressed laughing crowd of men and maidens who throng to the country pagoda feasts.

CHAPTER XX

DUTY DAYS

THERE are four uboné, or duty days, in every lunar month, on which all good Burmans are expected to go and worship at the pagodas. These are the eighth of the crescent, the full moon, the eighth of the waning, and the change, of which the second and the fourth are the more sacred. As the monks have nothing to do with looking after the spiritual state of the people, it is entirely a matter to be settled by one's self whether any particular worship day is to be observed or not. If you conclude that strict religious observances are only necessary for your spiritual well-being on the day of the full moon, or at any rate that you may leave out the eighth of the crescent and waning moon, then the uboné does not concern you at all, and you may proceed about your ordinary business without being considered a reprobate. The very devout may go to the pagoda on all the four sacred days of the month; but if you choose to omit one or several, or substitute an ordinary day for that provided by religious custom, there is no one to take you to task for it. Were a Burman never to go to the pagoda at all, or fail to do so for any considerable time, he would indeed soon get a very bad character among his neighbours, and might even be formally excommunicated by the yahans. There is, however, practically no constraint save the force of public opinion. But the duties of worship are so light, and so dependent in their details upon yourself, and there is so much amusement to be got out of a visit to the pagoda on an uboné, that few, even of the most worldly-minded, miss any great number of the appointed days, and a special festival is always carefully observed.

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With the really devout, a worship day always commences on the previous evening, that of the *apeitné*, or day of preparation. In most country villages, and occasionally even in the larger district towns, where there is more dissipation than devoutness, a few old men, as a voluntary work of merit, go round about the place beating the *kyizi*, the triangular gong, used only for this and similar religious purposes. The instrument is suspended by a string to a stick carried over the shoulder, and as the sounds vibrate, rise and fall, quicken and die away with the winding and unwinding of the cord, those who intend to keep the duty day well make ready for a start to the pagoda. Mats, sleeping-rugs, blankets, and eatables are gathered together; and the whole family, with the exception of a couple of the children and an old woman or so perhaps, left behind to look after the house, set off in a body, preceded in some cases by a *kyizi* of their own, struck at intervals by the head of the family, who slings it on a bamboo, to the other end of which, as a kind of equipoise, is fastened a lamp. The purpose of this ceremony of striking the gong is to announce to the four worlds the good work on which the party is engaged. They make their way to one of the numerous *zayats*, erected round the pagoda for the accommodation of pious people. If the family be a wealthy one they have probably such an open-sided, floored shed of their own, erected for the general use, but virtually reserved for themselves when required. If they have not, or if the shrine is small and the rest-houses few, they put up in one of the general *zayats*, where they can always find a quiet corner to settle in. There they sleep, or, what is better, tell their beads and meditate.

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Some time before daylight the food intended for the *yahans* is cooked, and when the sun rises a message is sent to the monastery that everything is ready. The alms have been put together in a heap in the middle of the *zayat*, in front of the permanent platform on which the mendicants take their station after they have arrived in a long procession of Indian file. In the meantime numbers of other more comfort-seeking laymen, who have slept at home, come trooping in from the town, also bringing offerings for the pagoda, and food for themselves and the *pyinsin*. When a

congregation has been made up, or when the family party is complete, the senior monk recites the Ten Precepts incumbent on all upathaka on duty days, and adds some portion of the sermons of Shin Gautama, the other pyinsin, sitting behind their big fans to hide the women from their sight, occasionally making the responses. Finally the Payeit-gyi, or some similar litany of praise, is intoned; all the congregation joining in the chant, with upraised hands clasping a flower or some other symbol of offering. With this the service ends. The yahans rise from behind their fans and file back to the monastery again, the food being carried after them by the pupils or the donors. When this is done the worshippers set about preparing their own breakfast—unless, indeed, as is probable, it was cooked at the same time as the food for the yahans. Each family eats separately, arranged in a circle round the great byat, or platter of rice. If, however, any one has some particular delicacy—the celebrated nga-pi gaung fish paste from Payā Gyi, in the An-gyi township, iguana's eggs from Shwe Gyin side, or pickled tea fresh from the Shan hills—he gives of his abundance to those round about; and any solitary stranger from a distance is always sure of an invitation to join some breakfast party. When all have finished eating, the fragments that remain are thrown out for the pariah dogs and the crows. Additional merit is of course gained by this act of charity. For the rest of the day, with the exception of the time that may be spent in repeating doxologies before the image of the Buddha at the pagoda, nothing is done. Every one is dressed in his best and goes about meeting his friends, or lolling comfortably with a cheroot in the zayat waiting for them to come to him. Vast quantities of betel-nut and pickled tea and local gossip are discussed. The racing-boat the Bassein men are getting ready to send for the October contests in Mandalay; the brass image Maung Waik, the extra assistant commissioner, is going to dedicate next month; the old witch down at Ywa Thit Gyi, who has caused the murrain among the Thu-gyi's buffaloes, and the nuisance it is that the English ayebaing will not allow her to be tied to a bamboo and pitched into the river in the good old fashion, to prove that she really does trade in the black art;

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she really does trade in the black art; the new style in Manchester-flowered turbans that Ah Lök, the Chinese pedlar, has brought in his boat from Rangoon—all these, and a great variety of kindred topics, are considered under all their aspects.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the people take this easy-going and frivolous view of duty days. Diligent seekers after kutho behave very differently. They do not merely limit themselves to the customary forms of worship and offerings. They sleep little, or not at all, the night before; telling their beads instead, and reading good books, some of the discourses of the Buddha, or portions of the greater zāts. All necessary business is transacted the day previous to the uboné, and neighbours are exhorted to observe the festival properly. After one simple dish in the morning, they eat nothing for the rest of the day; or perhaps on certain occasions do not break their fast till after mid-day, a custom very general on the first day of Lent. Instead of staying in the noisy zayat, where the assembled people are talking of light matters, laughing and diverting themselves, they retire to a tazaung on the pagoda platform, or to some place shaded by trees, where they finger the hundred and eight beads of their rosary, muttering, "All is transient, sorrowful, and vain; the Lord, the Law, the Assembly; the three precious things"; and meditate on the example of the Lord Buddha and the excellence of his Law. To vary the monotony of this performance, they go for an hour or two to one of the monasteries to talk with the prior or some learned brother, or perhaps to hear him read and expound one of the jatakas, or birth-stories.

So the duty day passes. By sunset most of the worshippers are making their way back to their homes; but a few zealous spirits remain all night in the zayat, and only return with daylight on the following morning. This simple round of celebration is repeated four times in every lunar month, with here and there a feast-day of some particular shrine thrown in, when the only difference is that there is greater ceremony and a more or less large influx of strangers, according to the sanctity of the pagoda.

The sole distinction between Lent—lasting from the day after the full moon of July to the full moon of October—and the rest of the year, is that all laymen are expected to be much more regular in their observance of the weekly religious days. It is not a season of fasting, but simply of stricter execution of religious duties. No marriages, feasts, or public amusements are held, or only by the graceless; and some of the yahans retire into the depths of the jungle, where they can devote themselves to meditation with greater security from interruption. The custom of regarding these three months as peculiarly sacred undoubtedly rose from the habit of the monks, in the first days after the Buddha's teaching, remaining steadfastly in their monasteries in Magadha during the period of the annual rains, devoting all their time to pondering over the Sacred Law, and expounding it to any laymen dayakas, or upathakas, inquirers, or believers and searchers after the truth, who came to consult with them in their dwellings; seeking to enter the current of perfection, and, attaining the state of arahan, to float into Ne'ban, the state of joyless, painless calm. Nowadays all are expected to study the Law for themselves; but in order to prepare themselves worthily for the Wā, the wealthier people often call in the more learned yahans to deliver exhortations in their houses. Numbers of relations and friends are invited, who bring presents for the holy man, in the hope of sharing the merit of the transaction. Portions of the holy books usually are read on these occasions, especially the much-admired Wethandaya Wuttu. The doctrine inculcated by this zāt is charity; and malicious people do not hesitate to say that the giving of alms is the invariable theme of the pyinsin. But I have at least as often heard the praises of wisdom from the Lawkanidi recited at such Lenten lectures, and a portion may be quoted here: "The ignorant bow down before the wise man. The riches of the wise man are like a bubbling spring, a fountain that never runs dry, and that, however constantly you may draw from it, is ever filled anew. The beauty of women and the sweetness of the sugar-cane bring satiety, but the words of wisdom never pall. The lazy man will never get learning. Any man may be endowed with riches, beauty, rank, youth; but without

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527 steed Kantika. Then he drew his sword, cut off his long
506 hair and threw it into the air, where it remained suspended,
till the Tha-gya-min carried it off in a basket and had his
Sula-mani shrine built over it. Hence the offering of fire-
balloons.

527 Thus offerings are made on earth, water, and in the air.
The whole month, from the full moon which 'ends Lent till
the feast commemorative of the nogāna alms of Thuzata,
is distinguished by specially abundant ahlu to the pagodas
and to the beikku. A peculiarly pretty offering is that
called a pan-taing, a pyramid somewhat like a pya-that,
entirely composed of flowers in wreaths and nosegays, which
is conducted with much dancing and sounds of music, to
be laid before the great image. Fantastic tin shrines and
lanterns made to hold big, two-inch thick candles, often
plaited of long tapers made of different coloured wax, are
presented, and along with these, huge monkish fans, each
adorned round the edge with tags of gold-leaf and little
pictures; big muslin dragons distended on hoops and long
streamers to be hung from the poles surmounted with the
sacred henthā, or the kalawaik, are also frequent. It is also
customary at this season to make the monks large offerings
of honey—pya-ye hlu-thi. This can hardly be called a
separate festival, but as the honey is only given in these
months, it affords sufficient cause for the exhibition of plays
and energetic dancing on the way to the monastery.

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527 All these religious observances, sufficiently mixed up
with secular enjoyment, are accompanied by other occupa-
tions which cannot be said to have anything directly to do
with religion. Such is the preparation of the boats, and the
practice for the races, which always take place in Thadin-
gyut. They must wait, however, till Lent is over; and the
racing boats are almost always kept under the abodes of the
yahans, so that even here there is ground for the assertion
that all great public feasts in Burma are connected with
religion. But the Burmans are very far from being sad
worshippers, and any one who has been in the country in the
months of October and November would be inclined to
assert that the whole round of existence in Burma is made
up of junketings and pleasure-parties.

CHAPTER XXIV

A GRACIOUS FLOUGHING

LIKE the "royal elder brother" of China, the king of Burma ought to go out once a year to plough the fields. Thibaw Min did not do it during the first two years of his reign, and, as far as I am aware, was equally heedless throughout the later years also. The consequences ought to have been disastrous. According to tradition, the failure of the Létwin mingala to come off should have caused a drought all over the country. But the Mo hkaung did not ensue; on the contrary, there was Mo kaung: an aspirate makes all the difference between a water-famine and seasonable showers. King Thibaw went very little indeed out of his palace. The annals of the country supply too many instances of kings, who, having gone abroad, found on their return to the palace gates that a usurper had taken possession of the throne in the meantime, and had no better greeting for his predecessor than a short shrift and a red velvet sack in which to plunge his body into the Irrawaddy. This unlovable custom had great weight with King Thibaw; but it was unwise of him to entirely abandon so venerable a tradition as the Létwin mingala. It was at this ceremonial that one of the earliest marvels in the life of the Buddha Gautama happened. The king Thudawdana, with eight hundred noblemen save one, was ploughing the fields at the annual festival. Many country people came to see the great sight, and the city emptied itself. The maids who had charge of the little Prince Theidat laid him down under the shade of a tree and went to look on. The infant Buddha rose up as soon as they were gone, and sitting

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cross-legged in the fashion in which he is ordinarily represented in the images, became sunk in meditation. The careless maids all through the hot afternoon forgot about their princely charge, until the returning crowds and the setting sun reminded them of their neglect. Then they hurried to the tree and found that the Zampu tha-bye had maintained its shadow in the exact same position all day as it was in when Prince Theidat was first laid down. Notwithstanding the arc the sun had described, the shade had all along hung over the head of the meditating Payā Alaung.

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The festival has therefore special reason to be celebrated by the descendants of the solar kings. It was also in every way a most picturesque fête, pleased the people, and offered a valuable opportunity for squeezing money out of them. King Mindôn never omitted it, even when he was grown old and portly, and little able to follow the slow-stepping bullocks. The ceremony took place in the beginning of June, about the time when the south-west monsoon usually breaks in Mandalay. The order went forth that the king would come out on such and such a day, and the people were enjoined to get ready. Not to see him—far from it. The right of a cat to look at a king in Mandalay was not well established. The Amein-daw was issued in order that the heads over ten houses, the Sè-eing gaungs, might see that the road in their district was in proper repair, and that the yazamat had not got out of order. The yazamat, or king's fence, was a kind of lattice-paling put up in every street in the walled town, and in any of those in the suburbs through which the king was likely at any time to pass. It was formed of thick diagonal spars made into hurdles, which were lashed to heavy posts sunk in the ground at regular intervals. The whole was whitewashed, and often flower-pots stood on the top of the posts to enliven the structure a little; and it certainly wanted enlivening a good deal. The lattice-fence undoubtedly looked very neat and tidy, as a long straight road lined with Lombardy poplars does; but it became terribly tiresome, when you found all the streets looking exactly the same, with this six-foot-high heavy wood fence standing within a couple of feet or so of

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the walls of the houses, and shutting out all view of these wooden structures. It had, however, to be kept in constant repair, and the house-reeve has to go round carefully to see that none of the whitewash had been rubbed off, nor any of the transverse bars sprung with the sun. Behind these the entire populace had to stay when the king, or any one of the queens, went out. Woe betide the wretch who was caught outside them when the procession had started. He might consider himself lucky if he escaped with only a belabouring from the fasces of the shrieking lictors. No one was supposed even to look through the little diamond-shaped holes. As a matter of fact they did; but by way of condoning for the offence, they rendered it more difficult by planting flowering shrubs between the bamboo houses and the lattice-work.

The procession on the route out to the Lèya, the royal acre, to be ploughed, was magnificent. The king was clad in all his robes of state: the *paso* with the *daungyôp*, the peacock sacred to royalty; the long silk surcoat, or tunic, so thickly crusted with jewels that its colour could not be seen; the *tharapu*, the spire-like crown, also a mass of precious stones; the twenty-four strings of the Order of the *Salwè* across his breast; and over his forehead the gold plate, or frontlet. The great gates in front of the stairs from the Hall of Audience were opened for him. Except the King of the Golden Throne no one might pass through them; there was the low red postern at the side for meaner beings—a shrewd device to make every one bow his head to the palace, whether he liked it or not. His majesty mounted the white elephant, which none save he might ride—for is not the noble creature a king himself?

The king mounted the Lord White Elephant at the palace of the latter, to the right of the Hall of Audience; but the princes and ministers, all of whom came to attend the great function in their robes of state, might not enter their howdahs till the stockade of the *nanday* had been passed. Then they fell into line in order of precedence, the wuns and *wundauks* wearing their official mitres—tall red velvet hats, with the top curled back like a nautilus, and the base surrounded with a row of gilt spear-heads. The long

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crimson velvet cassocks edged with rich brocade were also worn, and every one paraded all the umbrellas, gold, or vermillion, or green, that he was entitled to.

Thus they pass through the official town into the suburbs. The road taken is that by the east gate, whence, in a line with the steps of the Hall of Audience, a broad way runs straight away to the blue Shan hills; or at least to where, in Mindon's reign, the great Yankin-taung pagoda was being built, a few miles from where the hills rise, steep as out of a lake, from the flat rice lands. A death-like stillness prevails after the procession has passed the two timber guard-houses, between the tall columns of the eastern gate, surmounted by fantastic, triple-roofed teak pavilions, looking like Chinese joss-houses with their flamboyant carvings. The people are no doubt all there—we speak as those who know—crouching on their stomachs and peeping as best they can through *yazamat* and leaves of the bushes and legs of the soldiers that line the royal path all the way, striving their utmost to get a glimpse of the king and the splendour of his retinue; but they are not to be seen, and no one so much as sneezes. Thus the richly carved and gilt royal monastery is passed on the left; and immediately afterwards, comparatively open ground is reached, stretching out on either side of the high, raised road. A little farther on, half a mile or so from the eastern gate, a halt is made at the selected portion of the *ledawgyi*. Ploughs stand ready in a long row, extending away as far as one can see; for all the princes and ministers must plough as well as the king. The royal plough is thickly covered with gold-leaf; the part on which his majesty stands—for it must not be forgotten that the Burmese plough is something like a giant rake, and is not really a plough to English ideas at all—is gold, roughened with pearls and emeralds. The milk-white oxen that draw it rival the Lord White Elephant in the splendour of their harness. Crimson and gold bands hook them on; the reins are stiff with rubies and diamonds; heavy gold tassels hang from gilded horns. The gold-tipped ox-goad his majesty wields is covered with jewels and flashes like a rod of fire in the sun.

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The king ploughs a couple of furrows—or, rather, passes

the big rake once up and down the rain-sodden field—and then stops; for he is portly, and short of breath now. The ministers, no matter how fat they are, have to go on ploughing as long as the Arbiter of Existence chooses to look on. At last he declares that enough has been done, and preparations are made to go back again. He doffs his royal robes, for the tharapu, with its spire and jewelled ear-flappets, is burdensome, and the long surcoat, with its thousands of precious stones, is said to weigh about a hundred pounds. The Lord White Elephant is relieved too. He stalks back unencumbered, with his household of thirty retainers fussing about him with fans and swaying umbrellas.

The king gets into an open car, something like what Roman racing chariots are represented to have been. It is of course adorned as richly as everything else, and is drawn not by ponies or bullocks, but by men, eight of them pulling at each of the flexible shafts. The object is to prevent any one, the driver for example, sitting higher than the king. The English carriages presented at various times to different Burmese monarchs met with little approval. At first it was thought that the king was to sit on the box; but then it was found that with this arrangement there was nothing for it but that the driver should run by the side and therefore maintain a constant erect attitude in the presence of royalty. When it was found that the king was supposed to sit inside, with the driver two or three feet above him, a burst of indignation suggested that it was an insidious plot to put an insult on the majesty of the lord of the umbrella-bearing chiefs. For a time the vehicles were put away as lumber; but an ingenious handicraftsman adorned them with pyathats—five-roofed ecclesiastical or royal spires. They were now, when drawn by men, suitable for royal occupation; but unfortunately the solid teak-wood spires made them top-heavy, and especially unstable on rough Mandalay roads. They therefore degenerated into paraphernalia for exhibition on a kadaw day, or gauds for a procession at Tawadcintha feast time.

The king consequently returns on his low, gilt, native-made carriage, reclining on a mattress placed on the floor. He is now dressed in the ordinary national way, with a light

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linen jacket and a slender pawlôn (a fillet of book-muslin wound round the head), showing the thin white hair tied up in a little knot on the top of the head. The chief ministers are round about, fanning him assiduously; and he is in extreme good-humour, chaffing the Kin Wungyi, the astute prime minister, on the way he let his bullocks straggle away at random and the difficulties he got into in trying to turn them at the end of the field; while the stout old Naingangya Wun-dauk is rallied about the absurd state of heat he was brought into by his exertions. Possibly, if a venturesome and inquisitive subject were to be seen now, the king might pardon him for his rude gaping. But nobody knows in what temper the king is, and the silence is as death-like as when the party moved out. As soon, however, as the great procession has passed and has wound its way into the palace, the hitherto deserted streets are crowded again. Pwès begin with startling suddenness at every corner. Bands strike up; long lines of candles illuminate the streets at nightfall; rockets are let off, fire-balloons ascend, and everything is given up to rejoicing; for the lèdawgyi has been graciously ploughed, and the Lètwin mingala is a presage of abundant crops.

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It is needless to say that the persons mentioned are now all dead and that the British Government does not maintain the Lètwin mingala. The spectacle of the Lieutenant-Governor balancing himself on a harrow with the Commissioner of the Northern Division and the Judicial Commissioner for Upper Burma as acolytes, or rivals, would not be impressive. A striking spectacle has gone and cannot be revived.

could afford so much as this. The best engagements are those known as *ahlu pwè*, given by a rich man in celebration of some religious festival, or to commemorate some event in his family, such as the donning by his son of the yellow robes of the monastery. The elders of the village, or the custodians of the pagoda, often collect money for the performance of some of the religious *zāts*, depicting avatars of the Lord Buddha. Then there are subscription *pwès*, where some energetic lover of the drama suggests the propriety of a play to the inhabitants of the village, or of a street in the town. He goes round gathering subscriptions, and then negotiates with the *zat-òk* for as many nights as the manager is inclined to give for the money. This system has unfortunately led to abuses. Sharp individuals have discovered the possibility of collecting three or four hundred rupees among the people, paying the manager two hundred out of this, and keeping the rest for themselves. The dodge has been too often tried in Rangoon, but in the smaller towns it is still practicable, and is far too often carried out. Besides these performances by accredited companies, there are others called *kyigyin pwè*, given by professionals anxious to make a name for themselves, and for this purpose giving gratuitous exhibitions. These are naturally very uneven from the difficulty of getting a complete company together. But in all cases the vast majority of the spectators pay nothing at all. The guests invited by packets of *le'hpet* usually contribute a rupee or two towards the expenses of their host, but otherwise the entire cost is defrayed by him.

The *pwè* is begun by the arrival of the band, which, with characteristic Burmese disregard of the value of time, ordinarily comes upon the scene several hours before the actual commencement of operations. They occupy one side of the stage, and tune up their *saing* and play away vigorously while the people gather. The *zatthama* and *zatthamā*, the male and female artistes, drop in casually along with the spectators. Each is ordinarily accompanied by a servant to carry their dresses and help them in robing. All of them, women as well as men, make their preparations in full view of everybody. Each lady has a toilette-box with all the necessities for making up. Many are the hints the village

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CHAPTER XXXII

THE TAWADEINTHA FEAST

● 796 NEXT to the uproarious merriment of the New Year's feast in the spring, the festival of Tawadeintha is probably the most joyous and striking of the Burmese religious ceremonies. It is not of universal observance. Some districts keep it up with much more pomp than others, but are not always equally enthusiastic every year in the way in which they celebrate it. In Rangoon and Mandalay, however, it is carried out regularly with greater or less magnificence, and preparations for the procession and the performance of the mystery play often go on for many months beforehand.

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The feast commences on the first of the waning moon of Ta'saungmôn, about the beginning of November, and lasts over three days. It is commemorative of the Lord Buddha's ascent from the earth to preach the Sacred Law to his mother, Maya, then a Queen of déwas in Tawadeintha, the second nat-heaven. He was staying at the time in the country of Thawatti (probably the place now called Fyzabad), in the Zetawun monastery, and thence in three steps compassed the distance to the nat-heaven, situated above the Myinmo Taung, the centre of the universe. He had just finished a display of miracles on an immense road, constructed by him from one side of the world to the other, before a crowd covering an area of thirty-six yuzanas. The leader of the heretics who challenged the display of wonders, a man named Purana, was so overcome with chagrin that he tied himself to a weighted jar and was drowned. Arrived in the nat-seat, the Buddha preached a sermon on the duties of filial gratitude, to a vast congregation of byammās, nat-

déwas, and arahats, and having expounded the Law which was to lead them into the noble path of deliverance, descended again by a magnificent ladder composed in separate strips of gold, silver, and precious stones, to the ne'ban kyaung, where he received the usual pious offerings of the people on his arrival, on the day of the full moon of Thadingyut.

To recall this event in the Buddha's life is the object of the feast, and the preparation of the stage often takes considerably over a week, notwithstanding the facility with which bamboo buildings are run up in Burma. A platform is prepared, from twenty to fifty or sixty feet in height, according to the subscriptions and the scale on which it is intended to carry out the performance. Over this is raised a gaily-decorated pya-that, the tower-like spire with seven diminishing roofs, characteristic of sacred buildings, and leading up to it is a sloping way, representing the Saungdan, the path by which Shin Gautama ascended. Sometimes there is a similar sloping descent on the other side, figuring the ladder which led down to the monastery in the neighbourhood of Sampa Thanago, but more often the ascent and descent are compassed on the same slope, which comes to an abrupt end six or eight feet from the ground, on a level platform, covered by an ordinary roof, if it represents merely the earth, or the sacred pya-that if it does duty also for the ne'ban kyaung. Half-way up there is sometimes a covered stage, representing the Ugandaw hill, on which the Lord Buddha found purchase for his final step to the nat-déwa country. On the first day of the feast, usually about eight o'clock at night, the whole scene being lighted up by the brilliant moon, occasionally rather spoilt by smoky torches and the evil-smelling fumes of open crude-oil lamps, the procession begins. The image of the Teacher of the Law, always represented sitting cross-legged, is mounted on a little carriage, fitted to run on a tramway reaching right up to the top, and is dragged up by means of a rope and a windlass. This is done slowly and in a rather jerky fashion, partly because the apparatus does not admit of greater expedition, but principally to prolong the function as much as possible, so that all the people may see it and greater merit may be gained. Surrounding the Buddha is a great company

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of worshippers from all the higher seats of the universe, earthly kings in royal dress, the white umbrella borne over their heads, and ministers and pages at hand with trailing robes and gorgeous peacock fans; nat-déwas and their rulers in rainbow hues, with wings on arm and thigh; byammās from the thoughtful realms of the upper sky; a glittering throng, all uniting in praise to the Saviour of the World, the chant rising and falling on the night air as they slowly ascend. As a general thing it takes quite an hour to get up. There are many doxologies to be sung, and the performers, all laymen from the town, have paid many rupees for their dresses and want as many people to see their grandeur as possible. Technically, on the first night the image should go no farther than the Ugandaw hill, but, as already said, this half-way house very often does not exist at all, and even when it does there is usually no more than half an hour's halt, and then the procession goes on to Tawadeintha, the spire-covered platform on the summit. There the gay throng gather round the image in the attitude of adoration, and a man with a powerful voice stands behind it and declaims the sermon written down in the sacred books as having been preached on the occasion. The subject is filial piety. "I, the great Sramana, the mightiest of all beings, the teacher of ne'ban and the Law; I, the all-powerful, who by my preaching can lead my mother into the path of salvation and the final deliverance; I, who know all things and have beat down the passions under my feet; even I, with all this can but repay the debt due to one of the breasts that suckled me. What then can man offer in love and gratitude to the mother who nourished him at her breast?"

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The sermon takes very much less time than the ascent. There is a Burmese proverb—

Sa nahtaung thaw
Taye pyaw.

When the póngyi preaches
No harm the sleeper reaches;

that is to say, no great evil can befall you when you are assisting, in presence of body, if in no other way, at the

exercise of so meritorious a ceremony as the expounding of the Law. Accordingly the great crowd, who have been looking on with much interest at the progress up the taper-lit saungdan, commence generally to prepare for sleep in the zayats which surround the place where the stage is, or failing accommodation there, curl themselves up as comfortably as may be under the bullock-carts which brought them thither. A still greater proportion, however, gather together in circles to have a gossip, and this talk, accompanied by much smoking and chewing of pickled tea and betel, goes on till far into the night. An excuse for the scant reverence paid to the sermon, to which none but a few white-haired men and women listen, is, that what part of it is not in Pali is in such suggagyi, such a lofty and stilted style of Burmese, that no one can follow it. Accordingly the discourse is hurried through and the performers come down, and after putting off their fine clothes receive the congratulations of their friends. The image remains all night in "Tawadeintha," and the following evening the descent is made with similar ceremonial, and so the dramatic part of the festival is concluded.

But this is very far from being the whole of the proceedings. On both days numerous presents are made to the yahans and offerings to the pagodas, and these are carried round about the town and by circuitous routes to the monasteries, so that the greatest amount of pleasure and publicity may accrue to the donors.

Chief among these offerings are always huge spires, some of them fifty feet high, representing Tawadeintha, and similar to that on the summit of the stage platform. They are made of bamboo covered with pasteboard, glittering with gold and silver paper and painted in many colours, and are carried by ten or twenty men, on long bamboo poles. Round about them dance all the youth of the quarter or village they are presented by, young men and girls, all in their brightest clothes. In Rangoon scores of these offerings wend their way to the monasteries under the shadow of the great Shwe Dagôn.

Mingled up in the procession come white umbrellas, gold umbrellas, lofty bamboo poles with gilt balls quivering and swaying at the top, big pasteboard images of nat-déwas,

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bilus, princes, and animals, from the crawling turtle to the familiar two-legged (or six-legged, which you please) horse, all of them surrounded by their group of vigorous dancers. Most characteristic of the day are the padetha-bins, a sort of Turanian Christmas-tree, representing the fabled wishing-tree of the Northern Island and the heavens of the nats. In those regions the fairy branches bear whatever is wanted, from a savoury ragout to a complete suit of clothes. Upon earth the quivering bamboo twigs carry, dangling by strings, whatever the bazaar shops will supply, packets of scented soap, matchboxes, razors, clasp-knives, little looking-glasses, coloured-glass tumblers, candles, and dolls; and piled round the roots are heavier and more useful articles—blankets, mats, bales of yellow cloth, and earthenware or lacquer begging-bowls. These trees, each with its attendant band of dancers, are carried round and finally deposited before the house of the head of the monastery. Occasionally a ngwe padetha is offered, if the inhabitants of the wealthy districts of the town are particularly pious. This silver padetha is a tree similar to the rest, except that from its branches hang exclusively rupees and smaller silver coins, each wrapped up in a piece of tinsel or coloured paper. These silver trees, some of which are worth from 500 to 1000 rupees, are more frequently presented to the pagodas than to the monasteries. In the former case the custodians of the shrine take charge of the money for the purposes of repair and the payment of watchmen; in the latter, the kyaungthagyi, the kappiya dayaka, or lay steward of the monastery, receives the money, as indeed he takes the miscellaneous collection from the other wishing-trees, and dispenses all for the benefit of the kyaung and the giving of alms to poor travellers. It is noticeable, however, that the ascetic Sulagandi monks would altogether refuse to accept such a temptation to break their vows as a silver rupee tree.

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Spires and umbrellas, padetha-bins and hobby-horses, hover about the streets on the way to the monasteries all day long throughout the duration of the festival, and at night, after the mystery play is over, the bands which have been performing sedulously all day crash out again on the night air, and fragments of plays and songs are to be heard

everywhere. Chief among the night amusements too is the presentation of the naga, the huge serpent-like dragon, a great monster often considerably over a hundred feet long, formed of thin paper, distended on bamboo hoops. Each of these has a handle attached to it and a lighted taper fastened inside, and is carried by a man. The body is white, shading off into a blood-red head and jaws, and as the creature writhes its long folds and twists and darts from side to side of the road, the effect from a distance is very fine and startling on a first view. He plunges and coils about till the candles are nearly burnt out, and then is deposited with other offerings on the pagoda. All through the day and night there are generous people about, ready to give meat and drink, cheroots and betel, to any passer-by who chooses to afford them an opportunity of acquiring merit, for any act of charity accumulates kutho, even though the object aided be base.

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The offerings to the monks are also not confined to the fruit of the padetha-bins. On the third day of the feast the image of Shin Gautama is carried away from the bamboo erection and dragged through the town in the early morning, the monks following with their begging-pots and receiving the abundant alms prepared for them at the Sôndawgyi feast, which is intimately connected with that of Tawadeintha, and commemorates as much the Lord Buddha's issuing from the ne'ban kyaung at Sampa Thanago to beg for his food on his return from the second heaven, as the pious gift of nogana, made after the long fast, by Thuzata.

in the river Neritzara, at a place where more than 100,000 Buddhas had bathed, before obtaining the supreme intelligence. Then he divided the *noḡana* into forty-nine mouthfuls, ate it, and mounted the throne, whereon he sat for forty-nine days tasting no food, and combating Mān Nat, the spirit of death and sin. But ere he lapsed into meditation he threw his golden bowl into the river. It ascended the stream swiftly, floated steadily for a short time, and then sank in a whirlpool far down, leagues beyond the earth into the country of the *naḡās*, where it fell against the golden bowls of the three previous Budhs with a clang that resounded throughout the four worlds, and all things worshipped the present Lord:

King and high Conqueror! thine hour is come.
This is the night the ages waited for.

This event in the life of Shin Gautama is commemorated in the *Sôndawgyi pwè*. *Sônthi* is a sacred word set apart to denote the eating of members of the Holy Assembly, and, in remembrance of Thuzata's historic offering, the mendicants are feasted annually by the pious, with a splendour and profusion far exceeding the ordinary alms poured daily with unstinting hand into the begging-bowl. The date of the feast does not exactly correspond with the original event. According to the chronicle, the Lord Buddha attained the first state of *ne'ban* in the month of *Kasôn*, about April, whereas the feast of *Tawadeintha*, with which the *Sôndawgyi* is always immediately connected, is celebrated after Lent, at the full moon of *Ta'saung-môn* in November. The festival is essentially one of the town rather than of the country. Except the New Year's Feast, none of the religious celebrations can be really called universal, and the *Sôndawgyi* perhaps least of all. Villages and small country towns cannot get together the splendour necessary to distinguish the occasion from the ordinary domestic feasts, or even from the daily almsgiving to the mendicants. It is therefore in a large town like Rangoon, where there is a certain amount of money, and a facility for acquiring or borrowing ornaments and frippery, that the festivities are best seen. There the *fwè*—the word is more appropriate

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CHAPTER XXXV

THE NEW YEAR'S FEAST

ALTHOUGH religious festivals and *fites* are so abundant in Burma, it is undoubtedly true that none of them are universally observed in all parts of the country, except the New Year's Feast. In localities where the people are exceptionally pious, the end of Lent may be more carefully observed than elsewhere, some devoting themselves especially to pious observances, others to the more worldly ceremonies of the *sōndawgyi* feast. The Tawadeintha festival is an annual observance in some districts, in others it practically passes over unnoticed. Similarly with all the minor *fites*. But it is not so with the *thi'gyan pwè*. All over Burma, from the smallest jungle hamlet to the crowded streets of Rangoon and the straggling suburbs of Mandalay, the New Year is ushered in with the old formalities, and with perennial enthusiasm. Not an hour is cut off from the allotted number of days, and every item of the old practice is carried out with the same vigour.

For this reason the "Water Feast," as it is called by Englishmen, has forced itself on the attention of the most careless observer, and every one who has written about Burma devotes a greater or less amount of space to a description of the good-humoured merriment with which the New Year is introduced. I do not propose, therefore, to do more than allude to the lesser known formalities observed on the occasion.

The month Tagoo, the first of the Burman year, occurs in the spring, and New Year's Day is in the earlier half of April. But it does not fall annually on the same day. It

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remainder of the rites, and as this comes in from the elders of the surrounding villages and the kappiyadayakas of neighbouring religious houses, the kyaungthagyi of the deceased's monastery sets about erecting an edifice like a thein, a "monastery of the dead." This is a building, more or less substantial, according to the sanctity of the departed, built of teak, and open all round, with the tapering ecclesiastical pya-that rising over it. Hither the coffin, with the sarcophagus, is carried and deposited on a dais in the centre, a slight railing serving to keep off wild animals. Over it a large white umbrella, with a deep paper-lace fringe, is fixed, and round about hang a number of paintings, similar to those on the payaung-bông, some of them, however, representing the favourite subject of the different races of men as known to the artist—the swarthy Hindoo, the oblique-eyed Chinaman, the Kachin with his pig on his back, and the ghastly white-faced Englishman with dog and gun. Others are simply grotesque, and a few horrible, in their delineations of the horrors of hell. Nevertheless, they are all allowed to hang there, for though it is expressly stated that paintings are among the five species of gifts which are not meritorious (dancing is another), the ordinary layman thinks that the painting he gives must certainly be an exception. Here and there in this odd kind of mortuary chapel are also keinnaya, gay tinselled pasteboard figures of men with birds' lower extremities, manôttha keinnaya and nat keinnaya, the latter having the wings and gorgeous aspect of nat-déwas. Here the body lies in state, and there is a constant stream of pilgrims—some of them from far distant parts of the country—who come to say their religious sentences, make offerings of flowers and fruit as they would at the pagoda, and contribute what they can afford towards the remainder of the ceremony.

The body remains till the required sum is collected. During that time numbers of festivals are celebrated at the ne'ban kyaung; bands of music play frequently, and the same people often make three or four different offerings. The lying in state usually lasts several months, sometimes considerably over a year, and it is to be noted that a pôngyi byan never takes place during Lent.

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Guests begin to arrive later in the morning at the site of the ceremony. As each enters he is given a large cheroot by one of the girls who is posted at the entrance to the room. The guests are seated on mats before the platform for the monks and the tables of offerings described above. They are served tea and pickled tea leaf while the orchestra entertains them.

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The young men of the village arrive with their musical instruments, which they will play during the procession to follow. They join the other guests, taking seats on mats. The continued music of the orchestra forms a background to the constant buzz of conversation among the assembled guests.

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The initiates are carried into the room-- on this day their feet must not touch the ground-- and seated in chairs facing the monks' platform. A few persons spontaneously break into dance as the music goes on; more guests arrive; the horses which have been hired for the procession are brought to the scene and tethered nearby. Gradually the guests are summoned, in groups, to eat in a nearby building.

When all have had their meal, the procession is made ready. The young girls are given the carved trays and betelnut containers. The initiates make obeisance (shiko) with folded hands to the monks, as do all the guests. A monk chants prayers and blessings, the audience sings responses. The initiates now are carried from the room and seated on the horses, which will carry them around the village. A golden umbrella is opened and raised over each initiate, whose young male attendants hold it aloft, guide his horse, and carry him on their shoulders whenever he is required to dismount.

About mid-morning the procession leaves the monastery grounds, lead by the fathers of the initiates and young male relatives carrying the lacquer begging bowls which the initiates will use, followed by their mothers and female relatives bearing mats and pillows. Next follow the young girls, each carrying a decorated tray or container. After them come the initiates on horseback, led by their male attendants and followed by the young men's musical band which dances, sings, and plays as it moves along. The guests followed in their rear.

This procession wends its way along the road that links Tadagale with Mokine Road, and arrives at a spirit shrine. The guests make obeisance to the shrine and sit on the ground. The initiates are carried to the shrine by their attendants, to be shown to the spirits so that these beings will know of their work of merit and thus restrain their evil influences. The procession resumes, going along the main village path to the large Buddha shrine located about midway along this route. Here the boys are again carried from their horses to make obeisance, after which the procession sets out on the last part of the route, to the monastery again.

Now the initiates are lifted from their horses and carried, shoulder-high, three times around the monastery building, in clockwise direction. They are followed by their fathers, young male kin, their mothers and the young girls bearing the trays and containers.

As the third round of the building is completed and the group reaches the entrance to the room of the ceremony and tries to enter, they find themselves blocked by two women who hold a silk scarf across the entrance and loudly demand a huge sum of money as payment for permission to pass. The father of an initiate offers them, instead, five balls of candied puffed rice. Much good-

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natured bickering and banter takes place, in the midst of which the boys' attendants carry them off and hide them nearby, out of sight of the crowd. They demand ransom. Finally, the women who have blocked the entrance accept the offer of puffed rice balls, and the attendants who have hidden the initiates are persuaded to reduce the huge sum they have demanded to a token amount. The boys are returned, the crowd enters the ceremonial room, and the rite may proceed.

Sometime before noon the monks and the pupils of the monastery school have a meal, their last of the day, while the assembled guests sit in groups sipping iced soft drinks, smoking and gossiping.

About two o'clock gongs are struck to summon the monks to the ceremony. Now the initiates no longer wear jewelry or flowers, symbols of worldliness; and the silk scarves which earlier were worn on their heads are now worn across their chests, under one arm and over the other shoulder. The initiates sit on mats before the chair on which the chief officiating monk will be seated. A new earthenware pot is filled with water, flowers are placed in it, and a few yards of white thread are twined around the flowers. The pot is placed on the table to the right of the monk's seat. Its presence is supposed to counteract any evil influences by spirits or humans. It is a warning to evil spirits and enemies not to mar the proceedings.

When the monks arrive the orchestra again begins to play and candles are lighted. The several monks ascend the platform and sit according to rank. The chief officiating monk sits, as indicated, in a chair below the platform, facing the initiates and assembled guests.

The initiates repeat after an elder prayers and requests that they be allowed to enter the monkhood. The audience intones prayers for the remission of its sins, and the chief officiating monk recites the Five-Fold Path of Buddha. Further prayers by the monks are recited, in Pali, and then the chief monk preaches a sermon. His emphasis is very strong on the great glory brought to parents through the sponsorship of an initiation ceremony for a son. There are numerous allusions to incidents in the history of Buddhism to illustrate the importance of shinbyu and the even greater significance of entrance into the monkhood for life.

Following the sermon, the fathers of the initiates ascend the platform and place before each monk an offering of a new robe in an aluminum bowl.

At this point comes the ritual of water-pouring. The initiates' parents and nearest of kin slowly pour water, drop by drop, from bowls into cups which are set on the ground, as the chief monk recites prayers to call the attention of the earth spirit to the deed of merit being performed. It is believed that if they should be reincarnated in some lower form, they can be reminded by the earth spirit of their good deeds, and this will relieve them of their suffering and help to transform them into better reincarnated forms.

Now, threads are taken from the enclosure in which the initiates sat during the sermon. Their entrance into this enclosure, which followed their asking for admission to the monkhood, symbolized their acceptance into the order. These threads are now tied across the initiates' chests, over one shoulder and under the other.

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The orchestra plays as the initiates depart for the adjoining building to change into ordinary clothes, eat their last meal of the day, and bathe. Some guests now leave; borrowed articles, such as plates, cups and mats are gathered up for return to their owners, and eventually the orchestra departs.

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The initiates return to the front of the building in which the ceremony took place. They sit on mats for the shaving of their heads. Two women hold a long piece of white cloth before them to catch the hair as several men proceed to wet their heads and shave them clean with straight razors.

Once more the boys leave to bathe, then return and are seated before the chief monk. Their robes held in their hands before them, they recite prayers, give their robes to the monk, and ask him to dress them properly in the monkish garb.

Their robes donned, they squat before the monk and recite additional prayers, now following very carefully the special intonation appropriate to monks. The ceremony proper is complete.

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The following morning, early, a few relatives and close friends go to the monastery. The monks, including the novices, are offered food by them. A monk recites the Five-Fold Path, and then the ceremony of pouring water drop by drop is performed. Names are given the initiates-- special monastic names which they will bear only for the duration of their novitiate.

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In former times, and still today in the very remote villages of Burma, an initiate might spend many months, possibly several years, in the monkhood. Sometimes a boy would remain a monk for life. Today in Tadagale, as almost everywhere, initiates spend only a token period of about one week in the monkhood. During this time, they live the austere existence of the order, rising very early, spending long periods in prayer recitals, and abstaining from food after noon until the following morning. The short period of life as a novice is strongly in contrast with the easy-going, carefree childhood days that precede it. Some boys approach the time of their shinbyu with feelings of trepidation, and all are glad when the period spent in the monastery is over and they can return to the much less stern discipline of their parents.

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Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the village find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality, in the company of others at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others, people assume that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as 'getting married.' Villagers find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis; such behavior is regarded as contrary to nature. But however much it occurs, unchaperoned association is not approved, much less encouraged.

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Once a pair have decided they want to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, in a relatively small village such as Tadagale, something of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl, they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. Sometimes the approach to the girl's family is made directly; in other instances a female go-between will be employed. The latter is more likely when the girl's family

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871 the small boys, as day pupils. Monastic education is a traditional part of Burmese Buddhism, and almost all the men of Iadagale, whether reared in the village or elsewhere, have attended monastic schools for varying lengths of time.

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876 The monastic school curriculum includes elementary reading, writing and arithmetic, rudiments of history and geography, heavily colored by Burmese cosmology and folklore, and instruction in Buddhist precepts and proper conduct. There is heavy emphasis upon proper conduct. Instruction takes the form of mass recitation and rote memorization. Discipline is strict and the inattentive pupil is kept alert, when necessary, by means of the rod. As indicated earlier, many parents in the village favor the monastic as against the public school because of the strict discipline and the emphasis upon conduct and religion.

793 Concerning the second function of the monks, officiation at certain rites, it should be indicated that because Burmese Buddhism is not a congregational type of religion, the monks are not called upon to officiate at regular assemblies in any fashion akin to the role of the Christian minister. The monks do, however, play an important part in the initiation of boys into the monkhood; and sometimes take part in funeral rites.

The monk's function of giving advice and guidance stems from the fact that he is regarded, in the thinking of the villagers, not only as one to whom the greatest respect and deference is due by virtue of his dedication to his life to religion, but also as a living repository of wisdom and universal knowledge. He is a person to whom one may turn in time of uncertainty, doubt or stress for personal counsel. Problems relating to the conduct of one's children; concern over persistent lack of success in one's economic activities; or even matters of health may be taken to the monk. A great deal of the advice rendered by monks is formulaic, folkloristic and magical in nature. Particular monks tend to acquire reputations as being especially wise and helpful in particular kinds of problems.

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735 Support of the Monks. The monastery buildings and the land on which they stand are the property of the monastic order, held in perpetuity by grant of the government, free of taxation.

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735 [624] The monks are supported by the donations of the villagers. Every morning a monk, accompanied by one or two monastic school pupils, passes through the village to collect offerings of food. As he enters the compound of each home a member of the household takes a pot of cooked rice, which has been prepared for the morning meal, and places a few large spoonfuls in the monk's begging bowl. This minimum daily contribution of food is made by every Buddhist household, without exception; in addition, many families send bowls of curry and rice to the monastery. Giving food to the monks is an important act of merit to Burmese Buddhists. It is regarded as unthinkable that any household would refuse. When the hypothetical case was posed of such a deviant household, villagers agreed that such a family would be severely criticized and shunned in the village.

The few other things that the monks require for their sustenance are given by villagers on the important ceremonial days of the year. These items include robes, soap, matches, begging bowls, water strainers and needles.

796 • Duty Days. The Burmese calendar is a lunar one, and in each month there are four days-- duty or sabbath days-- on which the villagers go to the monastery

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to worship. These are the eighth day of the waxing of the moon, full moon day, the eighth day of the waning moon, and a day during the transition to the new moon. The second and fourth of these are considered especially sacred. On these duty days all work in the village ceases and the public school is closed. The people go, usually in family groups, to the monastery. There they say prayers before the images of the Buddha and present gifts to the monks. For a good many, a large portion of the day, after the visit to the monastery, is passed in social visiting and in generally relaxing. For the more devout, usually the elderly people, the duty days are more serious; they abstain from food and drink after midday until the following sunrise, spending the day in silent meditation and prayer. 796 ● [887]

Ceremonies

Thingyan, the New Year. Throughout the year a number of the Burmese religious festivals are celebrated in Tadagale. We may begin with the New Year festival, which occurs in April, beginning on or about April 13th, according to the determination made by astrologers.

Traditionally, the New Year festival calls for visiting the pagodas and monasteries and washing the images of the Buddha, after which one calls upon his elders and sprinkles them gently with scented water from a silver bowl. The young men of the village go from house to house, dancing and singing to the accompaniment of an orchestra. At each house they sprinkle water on the elders and ask them to call out the young girls. The girls are likewise sprinkled with water by means of a flower carried in the bowls.

In Tadagale today, many of the traditional customs of the New Year are still observed. Preparatory to the holiday, houses are swept and compounds cleared of all refuse. Everything is made clean and orderly. The images of the Buddha are washed, elders are called upon, sprinkled with water, and wished well. But, as in many parts of the country, the New Year festival has tended to take on a rather secularized character in modern times. Water sprinkling has become water throwing; groups of people, especially youngsters, go into the towns in carts or trucks, armed with buckets of water which they throw at passers-by. The name 'Water Festival' which has been given to the New Year celebration is singularly appropriate, since water-throwing and associated hilarity has overshadowed the sacred significance of the occasion. Some villagers go into Rangoon for the celebration, where everyone engaged in dousing everyone he encounters (monks excepted), utilizing every means from buckets to large hoses attached to city water hydrants. These activities are in contrast with the traditionally serious, sacred character of the New Year as conceived by older villagers. The schoolmaster of the community, a middle-aged man with many years of religious training, spoke of the New Year: 796 178 527

Thingyan is the New Year festival, but the villagers do not know the significance of the festival. They know only that it is a feast day and a holiday and a day for having fun. In reality there should be no frivolity on New Year's day; it is a day on which one should fast and pray, for one is now one year older and therefore nearer death. One should meditate on the futility of frivolity as compared with the blessedness of deeds of merit.

Vaso, the Buddhist Lent. In July, on the full moon day of the month of Vaso, there begins a sacred period of some three months, corresponding closely 796 785

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with the rainy season. The Buddhist monks take vows to live strictly by the Buddhist precepts and not to spend a single night away from the monastery during this time. The laity pledge to observe the fast from noon of the weekly duty day to the following dawn, an observance that at other times of the year is carried out by few people. Marriage must not take place during this sacred period; engagement contracted before the beginning of Wase should be consummated in marriage before the period begins, not carried over to its close.

On the full moon day that inaugurates this sacred period, the villagers make gifts of robes to the monks. Households sometimes pool money in a common fund from which the robes are purchased. The robes may be sent to the monastery or the monks may be invited to a donor's house to be fed and presented with the garb.

On the following day, the young people of the village go out in small groups to pick the 'Wase flower,' the flower of the Padauk tree (Pterocarpus sp.). In the evening, dressed in their finest clothes, they offer these flowers to the image of the Buddha that stands to one side of the main path of the village, about halfway between the northern and southern ends of Tadagale. Some travel to Rangoon to make their flower offering at the Shwe Dagon pagoda, the most famous of Buddhist shrines in Burma.

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Thadingyut, the Festival of Lights. For three months, from the first day after the full moon of the month of Wase, until the first day after the full moon of Thadingyut (October) it is believed that the Lord Buddha is in the land of the spirits preaching to his mother. On the first day after the full moon of Thadingyut he is said to return to the world of human beings. For this occasion, lanterns are lit and houses are gaily decorated with them. The lanterns are made of colored paper, shaped into small cylinders and placed around a saucer in which there is a kerosene-soaked wick. Villagers nowadays purchase these lanterns ready-made in the bazaars of Rangoon and use candles rather than wicks in them. All over Rangoon, and along the road between Tadagale and the city, colored lanterns are lit and hung around the houses, fences and hedges, providing a bright and glittering spectacle. Many villagers go to Rangoon to see the lights at this time.

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Kahtein, a Ceremony of Offerings to Monks. Between the day following the full moon of Thadingyut and the day after the full moon of Tassungmon (November) the villagers observe Kahtein. On this occasion of giving gifts to the monks, the offerings are on a larger scale than those of individual households at other times of the year.

The village headman collects money from each house in the village for this observance. A total of about Rs. 1000 (ca. \$200) is gathered to purchase gifts for each of the four monasteries located near the community. The presentation ceremonies for the various monasteries are held on different days, and many villagers attend all of them.

The purchasing of the gifts for the monks is entrusted to the headman. This is done in Rangoon and includes robes, food-carriers, utensils, crockery, brooms, and fans.

The ceremony takes place at the monastery. Each family cooks a meal of rice, curry and a sweet dish. All the food is pooled, and after the monks have partaken of their morning meal, the villagers eat. Music, dancing and singing

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goes on throughout the morning. About 2 P.M. a monk gives a sermon and recites prayers. One of the elders reads aloud to the assemblage an account of the expenditures for the gifts to the monks, concluding the event.

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Animistic and Magical Beliefs

Underlying the elaborate organization and practice of Buddhism, there is a considerable belief in nats, or spirits, and magic. Spirit worship, supposedly contrary to the teachings of Buddhism and opposed by the monks, is indulged in to varying degrees by the villagers. In Tadagale one frequently comes upon small wooden box-like structures affixed to trees, on which there is usually a little food and perhaps a flower as offerings to a particular nat. There seems little doubt that animism was even more important among the Burmese prior to the coming of Buddhism centuries ago. As noted in the description of initiation and wedding ceremonies earlier, nat worship has become interwoven with Buddhist beliefs and practices. It is also manifested in beliefs concerning guardian spirits of houses and particular places and in theories of the causes of many illnesses, including bewitchment and mental disturbances. Mediums, specially versed in the ways of the nats and possessing knowledge of cures for spirit-caused maladies, may be called upon for assistance.

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CHAPTER XIII

FESTIVALS

'The law is sweet, filling the soul with joy.'

Saying of the Buddha.

796 THE three months of the rains, from the full moon
132 of July to the full moon of October, is the Buddhist
484 Lent. It was during these months that the Buddha
241 would retire to some monastery and cease from
travelling and teaching for a time. The custom
was far older even than that—so old that we do
not know how it arose. Its origin is lost in the
mists of far-away time. But whatever the beginning
may have been, it fits in very well with the habits
of the people ; for in the rains travelling is not easy.
The roads are very bad, covered even with water,
often deep in mud ; and the rest-houses, with open
sides, are not very comfortable with the rain drifting
in. Even if there were no custom of Lent, there
would be but little travelling then. People would
stay at home, both because of the discomfort of
moving, and because there is much work then at
132 the village. For this is the time to plough, this is
241 the time to sow ; on the villagers' exertions in these

months depends all their maintenance for the rest of the year. Every man, every woman, every child, has hard work of some kind or another.

And so, what with the difficulties of travelling, what with the work there is to do, and what with the custom of Lent, everyone stays at home. It is the time for prayer, for fasting, for improving the soul. Many men during these months will live even as the monks live, will eat but before mid-day, will abstain from tobacco. There are no plays during Lent, and there are no marriages. It is the time for preparing the land for the crop; it is the time for preparing the soul for eternity. The congregations on the Sundays will be far greater at this time than at any other; there will be more thought of the serious things of life.

It is a very long Lent—three months; but with the full moon of October comes the end. The rains then are over; the great black bank of clouds that walled up all the south so long is gone. The south wind has died away, and the light, fresh north wind is coming down the river. The roads are drying up, the work in the fields is over for a time, awaiting the ripening of the grain. The damp has gone out of the air, and it is very clear. You can see once more the purple mountains that you have missed so long; there is a new feeling in the wind, a laughter in the sunshine, a flush of blossom along the fields like the awakening of a new joy. The rains are over and the cool weather is coming; Lent is over and gladness is returned; the crop has been sown, and soon will come the reaping. And so at this full moon of October is the great feast of the

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132 year. There are other festivals : of the New Year,
796 in March, with its water-throwing ; of each great
pagoda at its appointed time ; but of all, the festival
of the end of Lent is the greatest.

796 Wherever there are great pagodas the people will
come in from far and near for the feast. There are
many great pagodas in Burma ; there is the Arakan
pagoda in Mandalay, and there was the Incompar-
able pagoda, which has been burnt ; there are great
pagodas at Pegu, at Prome, at many other places ;
but perhaps the greatest of all is the Shwe Dagon
at Rangoon.

778 You see it from far away as you come up the
346 river, steaming in from the open sea, a great tongue
of flame before you. It stands on a small conical
hill just behind the city of Rangoon, about two miles
away from the wharves and shipping in the busy
river. The hill has been levelled on the top and
paved into a wide platform, to which you ascend by
a flight of many steps from the gate below, where
stand the dragons. This entrance-way is all roofed
over, and the pillars and the ceiling are red and
[712] painted. Here it was that much fighting took place
in the early wars, in 1852 especially, and many men,
English and Burmese, were killed in storming and
defending this strong place. For it had been made
a very strong place, this holy place of him who
346 taught that peace was the only good, and the de-
fences round about it are standing still. Upon the
top of this hill, the flat paved top, stands the pagoda,
a great solid tapering cone over three hundred feet
high, ending in an iron fretwork spire that glitters
with gold and jewels ; and the whole pagoda is

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778 happened, if there has been any trouble that has
782 brought them thus in the sunset to the remembrance
of religion. But at last they rise, and they light
their little candles near by where the old man and
the boy have lit theirs, and then they go away.
They are so sad, they keep their faces so turned
upon the ground, that you fear there has been some-
thing, some trouble come upon them. You feel so
sorry for them, you would like to ask them what it
all is; you would like to help them if you could.
But you can do nothing. They go away down the
steps, and you hear the nun repeating always,
'Sorrow, misery, trouble.'

So they come and go.

796 But on the festival days at the end of Lent it is
778 far more wonderful. Then for units there are tens,
for tens there are hundreds—all come to do reverence
to the great teacher at this his great holy place.
There is no especial ceremony, no great service,
such as we are accustomed to on our festivals.
Only there will be many offerings; there will be a
procession, maybe, with offerings to the pagoda,
with offerings to the monks; there will be much
gold-leaf spread upon the pagoda sides; there will
be many people kneeling there—that is all. For
Buddhism is not an affair of a community, but of
each man's own heart.

To see the great pagoda on the festival days is
one of the sights of the world. There are a great
crowd of people coming and going, climbing up the
steps. There are all sorts of people, rich and poor,
old and young. Old men there are, climbing wearily
up these steps that are so steep, steps that lead

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towards the Great Peace ; and there are old women,
too—many of them. 796
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Young men will be there, walking briskly up,
laughing and talking to each other, very happy,
very merry, glad to see each other, to see so many
people, calling pleasant greetings to their friends as
they pass. They are all so gaily dressed, with
beautiful silks and white jackets and gay satin
head-clothes, tied with a little end sticking up as
a plume. [292]

And the girls, how shall I describe them?—so
sweet they are, so pretty in their fresh dresses, with
downcast eyes of modesty, tempered with little side-
glances. They laugh, too, as they go, and they
talk, never forgetting the sacredness of the place,
never forgetting the reverences due, kneeling always
first as they come up to the great pagoda, but being
of good courage, happy and contented. There are
children, too, numbers and numbers of them, walking
along, with their little hands clasping so tightly some
bigger ones, very fearful lest they should be lost.
They are as gay as butterflies in their dress, but
their looks are very solemn. There is no solemnity
like that of a little child ; it takes all the world so
very seriously, walking along with great eyes of
wonder at all it sees about it.

They are all well dressed who come here ; on
a festival day even the poor can be dressed well. 796
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Pinks and reds are the prevailing colours, in checks,
in stripes, mixed usually with white. These colours
go best with their brown skins, and they are fondest
of them. But there are other colours, too : there
is silver and green embroidery, and there are shot-

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796 silks in purple and orange, and there is dark blue.
292 All the jackets, or nearly all the jackets, are white with wide sleeves, showing the arm nearly up to the elbow. Each man has his turban very gay, while each girl has a bright handkerchief which she drapes as she likes upon her arm, or carries in her hand. Such a blaze of colour would not look well with us. Under our dull skies and with our sober lights it would be too bright; but here it is not so. Everything is tempered by the sun; it is so brilliant, this sunlight, such a golden flood pouring down and bathing the whole world, that these colours are only in keeping. And before them is the gold pagoda, and about them the red lacquer and dark-brown carving of the shrines.

796 You hear voices like the murmur of a summer sea, rising and falling, full of laughter low and sweet, and above is the music of the fairy bells.

Everything is in keeping—the shining pagoda and the gaily-dressed people, their voices and the bells, even the great bell far beyond, and all are so happy.

796 The feast lasts for seven days; but of these there
778 are three that are greater, and of these, one, the day of the full moon, is the greatest of all. On that day the offerings will be most numerous, the crowd densest. Down below the pagoda are many temporary stalls built, where you can buy all sorts of fairings, from a baby's jointed doll to a new silk dress; and there are restaurants where you may obtain refreshments; for the pagoda is some way from the streets of the city, and on festival days refreshments are much wanted.

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These stalls are always crowded with people buying and selling, or looking anxiously at the many pretty wares, unable, perhaps, to buy. The refreshments are usually very simple—rice and curry for supper, and for little refreshments between whiles there are sugar-cakes and vermicelli, and other little cakes.

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The crowd going up and down the steps is like a gorgeous-coloured flood, crested with white foam, flowing between the dragons of the gate; and on the platform the crowd is thicker than ever. All day the festival goes on—the praying, the offering of gifts, the burning of little candles before the shrines—until the sun sets across the open country far beyond in gold and crimson glory. But even then there is no pause, no darkness, for hardly has the sun's last bright shaft faded from the pagoda spire far above, while his streamers are still bright across the west, than there comes in the east a new radiance, so soft, so wonderful, it seems more beautiful than the dying day. Across the misty fields the moon is rising; first a crimson globe hung low among the trees, but rising fast, and as it rises growing whiter. Its light comes flooding down upon the earth, pure silver with very black shadows. Then the night breeze begins to blow, very softly, very gently, and the trees give out their odour to the night, which woos them so much more sweetly than the day, till all the air is heavy with incense.

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Behold, the pagoda has started into a new glory, for it is all hung about with little lamps, myriads of tiny cressets, and the façades of the shrines are lit up, too. The lamps are put in long rows or in

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796 circles, to fit the places they adorn. They are little
778 earthenware jars full of cocoanut oil, with a lip
373 where is the wick. They burn very redly, and
throw a red light about the platform, breaking the
shadows that the moonlight throws and staining its
whiteness.

In the streets, too, there are lamps—the houses
are lined with them—and there are little pagodas
and ships designed in flame.

All the people come out to see the illuminations,
just as they do with us at Christmas to see the shop-
windows, and the streets are crowded with people
going to and fro, laughing and talking. And there
are dramatic entertainments going on, dances and
marionette shows, all in the open air. The people
are all so happy, they take their pleasure so plea-
santly, that it is a delight to see them. You can-
not help but be happy, too. The men joke and
laugh, and you laugh, too; the children smile at
you as they pass, and you must smile, too; can you
help it? And to see the girls makes the heart glad
within you. There is an infection from the good
temper and the gaiety about you that is irresistible,
even if you should want to resist it.

796 The festival goes on till very late. The moon is
so bright that you forget how late it is, and only
remember how beautiful is all around. You are
very loath to leave it, and so it is not till the moon
itself is falling low down in the same path whither
the sun went before her, it is not till the lamps are
dying one by one and the children are yawning
very sleepily, that the crowd disperses and the
pagoda is at rest.

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Such is a great feast at a great pagoda.

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But whenever I think of a great feast, whenever the growing autumn moon tells me that the end of Lent is drawing nigh, it is not the great feast of the Shwe Dagon, nor of any other famous pagoda that comes into my mind, but something far different.

It was on a frontier long ago that there was the festival that I remember so well. The country there was very far away from all the big towns; the people were not civilized as those of Mandalay or of Rangoon; the pagoda was a very small one. There was no gilding upon it at all, and no shrines were about it; it stood alone, just a little white plastered pagoda, with a few trees near it, on a bare rice-field. There were a few villages about, dotted here and there in the swamp, and the people of these were all that came to our festival.

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For long before the villagers were preparing for it, saving a little money here, doing a little extra work there, so that they might be able to have presents ready for the monks, so that they might be able to subscribe to the lights, so that they would have a good dress in which they might appear.

The men did a little more work at the fields, bamboo-cutting in the forest, making baskets in the evening, and the women wove. All had to work very hard to have even a little margin; for there, although food—plain rice—was very cheap, all other things were very expensive. It was so far to bring them, and the roads were so bad. I remember that the only European things to be bought there then were matches and tinned milk, and copper money

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was not known. You paid a rupee, and took the change in rice or other commodities.

The excitement of the great day of the full moon began in the morning, about ten o'clock, with the offerings to the monks. Outside the village gate there was a piece of straight road, dry and open, and on each side of this, in rows, were the people with their gifts; mostly they were eatables. You see that it is very difficult to find any variety of things to give a monk; he is very strictly limited in the things he is allowed to receive. Garments, yellow garments, curtains to partition off corners of the monasteries and keep away the draughts, sacred books and eatables—that is nearly all. But eatables allow a very wide range. A monk may accept and eat any food—not drink, of course—provided he eat but the one big meal a day before noon; and so most of the offerings were eatables. Each donor knelt there upon the road with his or her offerings in a tray in front. There was rice cooked in all sorts of shapes, ordinary rice for eating with curry, and the sweet purple rice, cooked in bamboos and coming out in sticks. There were vegetables, too, of very many kinds, and sugar and cakes and oil and honey, and many other such things. There were a few, very few, books, for they are very hard to get, being all in manuscript; and there were one or two tapestry curtains; but there were heaps of flowers. I remember there was one girl whose whole offering was a few orchid sprays, and a little, very little, heap of common rice. She was so poor; her father and mother were dead, and she was not married. It was all she could give. She sat behind

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her little offering, as did all the donors. And my gift? Well, although an English official, I was not then very much richer than the people about me, so my gift must be small, too—a tin of biscuits, a tin or two of jam, a new pair of scissors. I did not sit behind them myself, but gave them to the headman to put with his offerings; for the monks were old friends of mine. Did I not live in one of their monasteries for over two months when we first came and camped there with a cavalry squadron? And if there is any merit in such little charity, as the Burmese say there is, why should I not gain it, too? The monks said my present was best of all, because it was so uncommon; and the biscuits, they said, though they did not taste of much while you were eating them, had a very pleasant after-taste that lasted a long time. They were like charity, maybe: that has a pleasant after-taste, too, they tell me.

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When all the presents, with the donors behind them, dressed all in their best, were ready, the monks came. There were four monasteries near by, and the monks, perhaps in all thirty, old and young, monks and novices, came in one long procession, walking very slowly, with downcast eyes, between the rows of gifts and givers. They did not look at them at all. It is not proper for a monk to notice the gifts he receives; but school-boys who came along behind attending on them, they saw and made remarks. Perhaps they saw the chance of some overflow of these good things coming their way. 'See,' one nudged the other; 'honey—what a lot! I can smell it, can't you?'

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796 And, 'My mother! what a lot of sweet rice! Who
735 gave that? Oh, I see old U Hman.' 'I wonder
772 what's in that tin box?' remarked one as he passed
my biscuits. 'I hope it's coming to our monastery,
any way.'

Thus the monks passed, paying no sort of attention, while the people knelt to them; and when the procession reached the end of the line of offerings, it went on without stopping, across the fields, the monks of each monastery going to their own place; and the givers of presents rose up and followed them, each carrying his or her gifts. And so they went across the fields till each little procession was lost to sight.

796 That was all the ceremony for the day, but at dusk the illuminations began. The little pagoda in the fields was lighted up nearly to its top with concentric rings of lamps till it blazed like a pyramid of flame, seen far across the night. All the people came there, and placed little offerings of flowers at the foot of the pagoda, or added each his candle to the big illumination.

The house of the headman of the village was lit up with a few rows of lamps, and all the monasteries, too, were lit. There were no restaurants—every-
[444] one was at home, you see—but there were one or two little stalls, at which you could buy a cheroot, or even perhaps a cup of vermicelli; and there was
796 a dance. It was only the village girls who had
535 been taught, partly by their own mothers, partly by an old man, who knew something of the business. They did not dance very well, perhaps; they were none of them very beautiful; but what matter?

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We knew them all; they were our neighbours, the kinswomen of half the village; everyone liked to see them dance, to hear them sing; they were all young, and are not all young girls pretty? And amongst the audience were there not the girls' relations, their sisters, their lovers? would not that alone make the girls dance well, make the audience enthusiastic? And so, what with the illuminations, and the chat and laughter of friends, and the dance, we kept it up till very late; and we all went to bed happy and well pleased with each other, well pleased with ourselves. Can you imagine a more successful end than that?

To write about these festivals is so pleasant, it brings back so many delightful memories, that I could go on writing for long and long. But there is no use in doing so, as they are all very much alike, with little local differences depending on the enterprise of the inhabitants and the situation of the place. There might be boat-races, perhaps, on a festival day, or pony-races, or boxing. I have seen all these, if not at the festival at the end of Lent, at other festivals. I remember once I was going up the river on a festival night by the full moon, and we saw point after point crowned with lights upon the pagodas; and as we came near the great city we saw a new glory; for there was a boat anchored in mid-stream, and from this boat there dropped a stream of fire; myriads of little lamps burned on tiny rafts that drifted down the river in a golden band. There were every now and then bigger rafts, with figures made in light—boats and pagodas and monasteries. The lights heaved with

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796 the long swell of the great river, and bent to and fro like a great snake following the tides, until at length they died far away into the night.

I do not know what is the meaning of all these lights; I do not know that they have any inner meaning, only that the people are very glad, only that they greatly honour the great teacher who died so long ago, only that they are very fond of light and colour and laughter and all beautiful things.

But although these festivals often become also fairs, although they are the great centres for amusement, although the people look to them as their great pleasure of the year, it must not be forgotten that they are essentially religious feasts, holy days. Though there be no great ceremony of prayer, or of thanksgiving, no public joining in any religious ceremony, save perhaps, the giving of alms to the monks, yet religion is the heart and soul of them. Their centre is the pagoda, their meaning is a religious meaning.

What if the people make merry, too, if they make their holy days into holidays, is that any harm? For their pleasures are very simple, very innocent; there is nothing that the moon, even the cold and distant moon, would blush to look upon. The people make merry because they are merry, because their religion is to them a very beautiful thing, not to be shunned or feared, but to be exalted to the eye of day, to be rejoiced in.

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TAUNG thick. The door had two leaves to it and one mirror. However, this cupboard had fallen into disuse as a receptacle for clothes, the family preferring to keep their clothing in teak boxes. The other cupboard had no mirror and was used to store crockery in. It measured 2 TAUNG wide, three TAUNGS high and little less than one TAUNG thick.

There were also two huge boxes both of which had been received as a bequest from his father. They were very heavy and needed two people to lift each of them. Each measured one TAUNG and five fingers long, one TAUNG broad, and one TAUNG high. Each had four legs two inches high. They were identical and both were used for clothing.

There was also a round table with four legs about two feet tall and with a diameter of two feet. This U Mying bought in Rangoon for Rs. 3/6.

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A special basket was kept for storing women's HTA-MEUNG (outer feminine nether garments). The Burmese do not allow mixture of women's and men's clothing. They had one of these baskets with lid in Patheingyi. It was bought in Pantanaw and cost them 12 annas.

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The following bric-a-brac is reported:-a porcelain duck and a porcelain rooster which had been handed down for two or three generations and had been used as a receptacle for trinkets and other small articles; a glass elephant also about a hundred years old with drawers to contain trinkets.

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The following items are containers which may be regarded as household furnishings: a stoneware box about a hundred years old with a diameter of about twelve inches; a clay water jug overlaid with porcelain, also a hundred years old; two huge vessels for HSOON, one costing Rs. 25/- and lasting twenty years, and the other costing Rs. 15/- and lasting 13 years.

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These vessels were used when the family went to the KYAUNG to observe the sacred days. On such days HSOON for the whole family could be carried in these vessels. A KYAUNG food carrier woven of HME, (pith of the fibre used for mat weaving and overlaid with KYAUNG KIL) cost Rs. 4/- and was used for about thirteen years. Five huge earthenware jars each $\frac{3}{4}$ feet in diameter and 3 feet high, and three small jars were used to store fish. Each of the large jars cost Rs. 30/- and the small ones cost Rs. 4/8.

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Nats' powers for good include protecting the village from
dacoit attacks but does not extend to modern warfare. When the
Japanese armies were slicing up through Tenasserim in 1941, the elders
of Mang Mang Tinn's village prayed for nat protection against the
invaders. The nats replied "Dear villagers-we ourselves are wearing
raised longyi in this crisis (ready to run)." This is a Bangoon
town joke told among the sophisticated collagates at the University.
Not so well defined, but still sensed is a growing distrust of the
powers of nats to combat modern wars.

The nats can best be visualized as supernatural despots each
with his province (the home, village, sea, babies) and each exacting
tribute of periodic or constant attention in the form of flowers or
food, red and white cloth strips, and an altar which may have the
image of the nat carved in wood (or moulded in modern plastics).
Banyan trees with their multiple, snake-like trunks, are the most
common places of abode. When disaster in the form of sickness or
other ill fortune strikes, the nats are appeased with offerings
immediately. The SAY SAYA will frequently check with the family of
his patient to make sure this has been done. In Bangoon and else-
where, business men whose fortunes have been good are the main sup-
porters of the nat festivals which are given for the entertainment
of all the nats once a year in October, for a seven day period. NAT
KADEN (nat-wives) are the mediums who contact the nats by becoming
possessed by them at this festival and other special occasions (for
a single nat) throughout the year. These are married women or more
rarely housemaids who dance, answer questions and give opinions when
possessed.

Punishment for offense against the nats is first shown by
accidents or sudden illnesses like paralysis meted out to the offender.
If the offender continues the village as a whole will gradually be
afflicted. For example, when a drunkard offends the nats with
blasphemous language evil falls on the entire village. Villagers led
by the elders and a prominent NAT-KADEN go in a body to the major
banyan tree shrine to have an understanding with the offended nats.
Offerings are given and attention of the nats called to the woe of

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during the months of Waso and Magsung. Mangoes can be preserved in the form of pickle or of salted mangoes. In Rangoon, ripe mangoes can be obtained all year round since some are laid by in cold storage, but they are very expensive out of season and cost about three rupees each.

MAYAN THREE AINNE (ripe marians) appear during the months of Tabung, Tagu, Macon and Mayon. In Mayon month the output of marian fruit lessens.

Consumption of NGAPI YE: NGAPI YE is available all the year round. In Pantanaw it was eaten every day for both meals of the day. Ten ticals of NGAPI YE lasted the family four meals. In camp it is consumed only occasionally - about four days in the month. Two and one half ticals are taken with each meal and this would add up to twenty ticals for the eight meals in the month.

Consumption of firewood: If all the firewood needed by the family in camp had to be bought, the consumption of firewood per month in the camp would amount to 200 pieces of Kanasee wood at the rate of Rs. 4/- per 100 pieces. About 3 months ago they found that they did not need to buy any firewood at all as they could gather a sufficient amount of brushwood to serve in its place; but now none of the members of the family remain free to go in search of brushwood and all their requirements have to be bought.

In Pantanaw, their needs of firewood for cooking were filled by three huge Eoko trees which they owned. This was also supplemented by the wood that they had to buy for processing the fish. Three tons of firewood would last 1 1/2 or 2 months, costing Rs. 25/- per ton. The firewood for cooking did not cost anything beyond the two or three rupees that had to be paid to the person who cut down the branches.

Consumption of PAUK PAUK PYIN: This is not found in Rangoon at all. In Pantanaw it was eaten at charities, particularly the Waso month charity. Each member of the family ate about 10 ticals each, and 40 or 50 ticals were needed for all. This was eaten only once a year and even then not necessarily every year.

KATE KAYAR is eaten in camp only about once a year. This is the Rangoon equivalent of PAUK PAUK PYIN. KATE KAYAR is different in having no oil in it. One anna's worth weighs five ticals and six or seven people eat an anna's worth each at one eating.

In Pantanaw bread was sometimes eaten at SHIN FYUS (novitiation ceremonies). MON-HIN-GA was eaten at the beginning of the Buddhist lent, when PAUK PAUK PYIN, MON KYAR YOE and MON SEIN BUUNG were also eaten sometimes. KAUK HWYIN BUUNG was eaten at this time and also at U Myaing's daughter's naming ceremony. GYIN THONE, LAPHET and tea were served during novitiation ceremonies, and Mandalay HTO MON was eaten during the naming ceremony. Sweet tea was also served during marriage ceremonies. Rice and curries were eaten at some of the bigger festivals. KAUK HWYIN was prepared for almost every ceremony or festival.

In Rangoon, U Myaing had MON HIN GA and sweet tea on the full moon of Tassungon from a charity in the THAYET-TAN KLAUNG-TAN. He also had some MON-HIN-GA not long ago at a head washing ceremony for a child. There are no charities held in the camp enclosure.

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70. (D.A.Z.) They don't bring any good. You can only get food if you have done good in the previous existence in which case you will be wealthy and live long.
70. Q. "What kind of misfortune do the Nats bring; he mentioned sickness - what are some of the others?"
- A. According to what many people say, they can cause ill health and even death - that's what they say.
- Q. Do they mean to say that people are killed by the Nats?
- A. (D.A.Z. & U.M.) Yes. We say that such a person has died because the Nats have caught him. That's what we mean when we say that the Nats work evil.
- (U.M.) To die of drowning - that is because the Nats have been wronged; that is what most people say.
- (D.A.Z.) We don't know these things very well.
71. Q. What about when the fishing is not good - the fish do not come upstream. Do the Nats have anything to do with that?
- A. (U.M.) Many people say so - that the fish are said to be "lifted" or kept upstream by the Nats. We see nothing, but many people say that it is so. Acting on such talk we have to go to the Nats at the IHS and give offerings of liquor, food, curry and duck curry. According to custom we have to do it that way; we have to hang coconuts (on the offering place) and this is to appease the Nats who are holding up the fish, so that the fish might come downstream. When this happens, people become confirmed in their belief; when the fish don't come downstream they say, "Oh these are all lies about the Nats." They speak in this fashion.

The following information, which duplicates in part that given

above, was secured at a later time.

"We give offerings only to U SHIN GYI and we do so twice a year, in the months of Waso and Thadingyut. These offerings are to keep us from harm. We do not worship other Nats because we have no family tradition of having done so. Of course, we do not have a family tradition of worshipping U SHIN GYI either, but then the whole Burmese nation worships him.

"In IN work we also give offerings to an Indian Nat who is known as KWIN BAING of Nat-Mauk IN. We give him offerings of roast chicken and liquor, black rice or KAUKHWIN, bunches of bananas, coconuts, money, Hteinains and GAUNG BAUNGKES. These offerings are made only at IN time. No one bothers at other times.

"Some people even get possessed by the Nats, and then they say things like: 'The fish do not come downstream to the IHS because I am preventing them. I am doing this because you do not worship me, etc.' When the people hasten to propitiate the Nat, the fish either come down to the IHS or they do not. If through a coincidence the fish do come down, people come to believe in the Nat. I do not believe in them much. What I do, I do because those in the past have always done so.

"They have no U SHIN GYI ceremonies here comparable to those we had in Pantansaw. Here they give offerings to them only in their own homes. In Pathe, the whole village got together for the ceremony. In the month of Pyatho when the river begins to subside we start to take collections in the village. We collect only on our side of Pathe village, which is built on the three banks at a confluence of two streams. Our side of the village contains about 250 houses, and each house-

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hold contributes as much as it wants to from one anna to eight annas. If more money is needed, people who have money contribute more. These offerings are given so as to keep danger away. It is not for merit. We don't know about that. One thing is certain; epidemics like plague and cholera never visited our village, and we have not had a single case of dacoity in our village in my whole lifetime.

"The headman makes the necessary arrangements, buys the black rice, coconuts, jaggery, Burmese tea leaves, candles, bananas, and places them on the special place prepared for them.

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"We have not seen any person here in Rangoon being possessed by spirits, but we did have acquaintances in Pantanaw who were possessed, he loses consciousness of himself as a human being. He begins to tremble, and the Nat begins to speak through his mouth. I don't believe in the other Nats, but I do believe in U SHIN GYI because of the testimony of my own eyes. In the districts we place offerings to U SHIN GYI on a small bamboo framework made of four little bamboos each with a diameter about the size of your fountain pen. This framework is held together with pith of the nat fibre plant (NGHEE). Sometimes sceptical people take a hand when the framework is being put up, and tie the NGHEE very lightly, so as to break very easily. As a result the TAUNG high framework is so flimsy that it would collapse even if a bird were to jump on it. But the strange thing is that when a person becomes possessed and leaps onto the altar and dances about - nothing happens. In this condition, a person may perform on the harp (SAUNG) even though in his ordinary waking life he does not know how to play it. He also dances on glass tumblers. This took place before the whole of our family, together with about a hundred other spectators. Ko Ba THIN's son, Htun Ngwe, who is of the same build as myself, leaped onto the bamboo framework and began eating the food laid out on it. On that occasion we had been expecting Ma Kyin Yone to be possessed, but she did not appear because her husband would not allow her to come. We had invited her to come because she had been possessed before. In our village these two were the only people who were possessed. The man was possessed once, and the woman about six times. On these occasions the whole village turns out to watch.

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"The altar is built on the evening previous to the ceremony. It is made of two levels, and is about 4 TAUNG square and one TAUNG high, and is used to hold 37 plates, each holding plantains, black rice, coconuts, jaggery, LAPHEE (Burmese pickled tea), etc. The elder in charge then prays to the 37 Nats including U SHIN GYI for help. This ceremony has nothing to do with the phongyi, and the village phongyi is not invited. The two spheres are entirely different. The phongyi does not worship the nats. The systems of belief are entirely different. We worship both. The spirit does not appear at every ceremony - only when there is someone to possess. We had relied on Khin Yone but she did not appear and Htun Ngwe was possessed instead.

"When the nat spoke through Htun Ngwe we asked him about himself and his past life, but he refused to say anything, saying that it made him sad to think back on it. (the possessing nat's past). When the person recovered and we questioned him, he could not remember anything of all that had occurred while he was in the trance. In the whole district there are only four or five people who have been ever possessed, and so the majority of people in the district have not witnessed a single case of possession of Nats.

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"U SHIN GYI avoids eating flesh, does not drink liquor, and even when eating betel does not put tobacco (REE) in his gird. Out of all the food that is offered to him, the nat partakes only of a little of the black rice, the remainder being shared by the members of the village. Enough food is prepared to feed the whole village, and a crier is sent through the village to announce a general invitation to everyone. When food has been

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set aside for the 37 plates, the people are served.

"The Nat ceremony at the Nat-Mauk IN is for KWIN BAING, the Indian Nat. He is given offerings of chicken, liquor, Htamcins, etc. This Nat lives in a tree and he has made this known by possessing someone and speaking through him. After the food is offered to this Nat, the people who gave the offering eat it all up, drink all the liquor and present the Htamcins to the aged and elderly. The gold leaf is stuck onto the trunk of the Nat tree, and the black rice is thrown away.

"The person who works his IN for himself alone has to provide for his own offerings. If the IN undertaking is a cooperative one the various members get together to give offerings to the IN nat."

In holding a ceremony for U SHIN GYI there are some items offered which are only just sufficient for his consumption, and for a few other people. Some items of food, however, are prepared in sufficient quantity to feed the whole village.

The items used in the yearly offering to the IN nat KWIN BAING include:- One chicken, one bottle of liquor, jaggery, Rs. 2/8 worth of KAUKHNYIN or black rice and about four condensed milk tins of rice. No Htamcins. The nat who likes Htamcins is the MSE-DAN-SHIN nat to whom King Anawratha himself is believed to have given offerings.

Items used in single ceremony for U-Shin Gyi include:- Three condensed milk tins of black rice or KAUKHNYIN @ Rs. 3/-, ten coconuts @ Rs. 1/- each, 50 tins of LAPHET or Burmese pickled tea @ Rs. 6/- per viss (100 ticals), about 4 or 6 annas worth of betel quid, about three viss of jaggery, costing Rs. 5/-, 8 packets of 10 candles @ 2 annas per packet and flowers just sufficient to place on the altar. Rs. 2/- worth of flowers are bought @ one anna per bundle. The flowers are mainly SHIN CHE (diamond decorated). Some flowers need not be purchased, but can be easily gathered from the trees. THE BYAY (pleasant country) flowers and coconut kernels are also placed on the altar. These kernels are obtained free of charge from the coconut trees.

Buddhism

The practices of Buddhism are both a religious duty and a social occasion for the family. The difficulty of separating the everyday "secular" activities from the supernatural will be especially apparent in the passages below.

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Major Village Ceremonies

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With regard to religion there are four ceremonies which all the people in the village observe. These are: PAMAR THA NAR (give away ceremony), KA HTEIN (opening ceremony of end of Lent), HSU TAUNG (Yi-wah-ah-huil) pagoda festival in the hot weather, and the KASON HIAUNG YE THUN (month of Kason-banyan tree-water pouring). There are also other ceremonies which are celebrated individually and according to personal preference and requirements, such as the Novitiation ceremony and the other monthly festivals which are celebrated through out the rest of the country.

The PAMAR THA NAR ceremony marks the end of the Buddhist Lent. It is held on the full moon of Thadingyut. At this time new robes are donated to the phongyis and all visitors are feasted. For this festival a meeting of elders in the village is convened. These elders then make arrangements and send out invitations to 30 or 35 phongyis to come to the village and partake of the HSOON and the other gifts that are to be donated. There are only three phongyis ordinarily resident in the village; the rest have to be invited over from the phongyi kyauangs in the countryside around. When the phongyis have been invited, the village is divided up into 30 or 35 groups of 10 to 20 houses each, and each of these groups sends one representative to the meeting. Then names of the several phongyis are placed in a box and each of the group representatives has to draw out one name. This name he carries back to his group, and the individual families in his group donate as much as they can, or as much as their reverence for this particular phongyi inspires them to. These donations can take various forms - such as robes, HSOON, coconuts, bananas, toffee, etc. Sometimes one single person in the group undertakes to donate everything for his group out of his own pocket.

When phongyis from elsewhere are invited over, they bring with them three or four young boys each, and these boys also have to be fed. Ordinarily, there is only one KOYIN in the village, one U PAZIN and one phongyi. But when SHIN PYU time comes, the number of KOYINS rises to seven or eight.

All the members of the group bring their offerings and donations to the house of the group elder. The donations sometimes include even pillows and blankets. U Myaing gave a HSOON OTE container full of HSOON which cost him Rs. 15/- or Rs. 20/-, and also some face towels. These are given only once a year and U Myaing gave for himself and his household. Complete accounts are kept by the elders of all these donations.

The gifts that have been received have also to be divided by lot among the phongyis. Since the number and quality of the donations from the various groups are bound to vary, everything is pooled and divided again as equally as possible into as many piles as there are phongyis. Then the phongyis have to draw lots as to who shall get which pile.

The KAHTEIN ceremony is also celebrated by the village as a whole. A feast is given to between two and three thousand people. Thirty or thirty five phongyis from the neighbouring villages are put up at the village phongyi kyauang. The money which is needed for the ceremony is collected in the village. U Myaing had to give about fifty or sixty rupees because he could afford to do so. Collections from the whole village amounted to between Rs. 1,500/- for later; it is used to donate to phongyis and buy robes for them. No one demands a checking of the accounts, but those who are in charge read these accounts aloud before the assembled villagers. An orchestra and PIAZAT (play) is hired for the KAHTEIN ceremony. There is also a big PABETHAR (a gift tree) which is planted in the ground and anyone can come and hang gifts onto the branches of this tree - such as beading beads, robes, tinned biscuits, exercise books, pencils, slippers, umbrellas, sacks of rice, toffee, etc. Later, these

phongyas have to draw lots for these.

There are thirty days during which the KAHKIN ceremony can be held - from the full moon of Thadingut to the full moon of Tassungun. When the phongyas have been given HSOON, the ceremony is over. But preparations have to be made four or five days ahead for building the equipment, for cooking the food, for rehearsing the play to be put up by the youngmen, etc.

The Tagu month festival is a religious festival and is celebrated in their village at the HSU LAUNG PYE pagoda. Collections are taken, and people donate from Rs. 2/- or Rs. 5/- right up to Rs. 300/- each. A Buddhist troupe is engaged for the occasion, and they are paid at the rate of Rs. 150/- or Rs. 200/- a night for six or seven nights. This festival takes place on the full moon of the month of Tagu. Beginning from the eve of the full moon, people start coming to the pagoda bringing gifts of fruit, PAUK PAUK HSOTE trifle, toffees, bread, cheroots, betel boxes, GYIN THAKS trifle, etc., and these people have to be fed too. U Myaing donated between forty and sixty rupees; while people who are rich donate between three hundred and four hundred rupees. (U Myaing's village of Pathwe is divided by a fork in the river into three sub-villages, and when collections are taken they are only confined to one's own side of the river.) Enough food is prepared to feed three or four thousand people. Butter is bought by the karesene tin, ripe bananas, fried fish, pork, etc., and the guests are fed till everyone is satisfied. About twenty baskets of rice have to be boiled by about forty to fifty people.

The guests are fed in three rest houses, each holding fifty people at a time. Even so, there are so many guests that some people have to return home without having eaten anything at all, and even though a lot of food still remain. The guests who come are both Karens and Burmans, and when they come they sometimes bring along cows or horses which have decorations and gifts hung on them. Anyone who so desires can go and hang his gift on to the animal as well.

Everyone contributes his or her labour. It is not good to hold back. When there is a festival or a ceremony in the KLAUNG, all the families look up their houses and go over to help. Even fish coming down to the IN are not picked up till the festival is over. Everyone helps in getting up festivals. Burmans and Karens all come to help at some household which intends to give charity on a grand scale.

U Myaing's Shifting Relationship to Buddhism

In an interview U Myaing was questioned as to his relationship to Buddhism as a "taker of lives" (fisherman). His sense of guilt in Pathaw where he fished and relief from this in the camp is given below verbatim from the interview.

- A2. Q. Would you tell U Myaing that I as a foreigner understand very little about Buddhism but I've heard that the fishermen who take lives of the fish are regarded unfavorably. Ask him if this is true.
- A. (U.) There are the 5 KAMIS (commandments - Pali: KAMMA - to do). Thou shalt not take the life of others. Thou shalt not wrong the wife and offspring of another. Abstain from intoxicants and from stealing the property of others. We have to observe these. The Buddha has preached it.
- Q. Isn't U Myaing, in working the IN, taking the lives of the fish?
- A. Yes, I am taking the lives of the fish. I have to do it to get food - to make a living.
- Q. But you do not wish to take life?

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remaining huts. They have lists of the people in their charge. Maung Myunt and Aung Gyi are under the school-master, who is the most important and influential man of all. These people have to see to the DHAMI thatch roof, the bamboo, etc., and if there are any repairs needed they get together, estimate the cost, and then go to the government authorities. U Myaing does not know which office they go to.

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The phongyis resident in the camp do not participate in the secular life of the camp, beyond giving the SILAS and coming occasionally for HSOON. In Pathwe village there were small boys whom they taught - thirty or forty of them, but in camp they do not help to educate the young. People go to these phongyis in camp on holy days, to take the SILAS. They do not even preach to the laity. This U Myaing thinks to be due to the fact that they do not know how to, being themselves refugees from country villages.

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On the 8th and 15th day of the waxing moon and the 8th and 15th day of the waning moon, the four holy days of the month, Daw Aye Zar goes to the Shwe Dagon to say her prayers. U Myaing cannot do likewise because he has to go to work.

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U Myaing has very little dealing with the government. They do not come for taxes, and in fact even have to provide the refugees with items of food and apparel. The people in the camp are not members of a closely knit organisation. They are made up of workers and families all thrown together by the exigencies of the political situation. The three mentioned above are the only ones in the whole camp who have charge of the camp welfare. They take the responsibility for disposing of the bucket sewage and the dirt accumulated in and around the camp. They arrange for government sweepers to come for these. There have been no fire drills or any such exercise held in the camp.

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In Rangoon the family has few entertainments. There was once a government film show screened in the camp, and the other night Ma Khin Myein went with some friends to a nearby pagoda to see a lantern slide show of Buddha's Relics. They have never seen a modern Burmese play or FILM. As Daw Aye Zar expressed it, "How can we go and see one when the charge for admission is a rupee

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for an adult and 8 annas for a child."

for an adult and 8 annas for a child."

In camp U Myaing does not play cards very much except when at funerals to pass the night away. His total stakes on such occasions are only about eight annas or a rupee. He has never been to the races, and he never goes about town for fun. He does not go visiting much except when on business. When he does go, he visits Hla Khin, his first cousin who lives in HSIN-KIN-KWEI-THIT, and his cousin Ma Sein Maing who lives in Ahlone. In Rangoon there are about 40,000 to 60,000 refugees from Pantansa district. Sometimes he visits other people whom he knew at the village. However, in a single year his purely social visits to people outside of the camp totals only three visits - one visit each to three houses.

Dr. Orr, Dr. Sheppard, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Macgrave are the only white men he has met. He does not know any other Americans or Englishmen.

U Myaing has not gone to the pagoda once in the present month. During the past month, when he was working at the Jubilee Hall, he used to cross the pagoda platform twice a day going to and coming from his work. In the last year he donated some money at the Shwe Dagon. He gave 2 annas on three occasions four annas on 6 occasions, and once, when he drew his monthly pay, he donated a rupee. Apart from these, he donated money 6 or 7 times during the first one or two months of their arrival, during the time when he was going around selling mats. He gave altogether three or four rupees in these six or seven times.

Only Daw Aye Zar regularly goes to the pagoda solely for the sake of worship and prayer. Ma Aye Myaing has been there about five times on three occasions, but, they were while she was on her way elsewhere, and only once or twice purely for worship. Her total offerings amount to only about a rupee. Daw Aye Zar remarked that they would not have had the opportunity of praying at this great pagoda if they were still in Pantansa. Daw Aye Zar gives offerings of flowers, money, candles and incense, and goes up the pagoda frequently.

In his worship, U Myaing recites the 5 SILLAS. He prays for

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THE ORIGINS OF BURMESE DRAMA

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2. FOLK FEASTS AND SPIRIT DANCES

According to legend, the Sanskrit drama was created in the Silver Age to cheer up the people, who were no longer happy as they were in the Golden Age; the Japanese drama was first used by the gods to beguile the sun-goddess to reappear; and the Chinese drama came into being as the result of the Emperor Yuen Tsung ordering, in the eighth century after Christ, a group of children to be trained to sing the various deeds of the great national heroes before his consort, in appreciation of her love for him.¹ The Burmese, however, have no such legends, and the origins of their drama were in the religious *Nikkathidin*. But before considering those Burmese miracle plays, perhaps it will not be out of place to give an account of the various folk feasts and spirit dances, which have in them elements essentially dramatic, and which gave some idea of the dramatic to the people and paved a way for the coming of the religious pageants and plays.

Folk feasts can be divided into two classes, those directly connected with Buddhism and those which are not. The Buddhist feasts occur on fixed dates and are celebrated all over the country. Of those, two are especially interesting, the feast of the Full Moon of the month of Tazaungmôn (which occurs in November) and the feast of the New Year (in April). Though the Full Moon of Tazaungmôn is an important Buddhist festival now, it is extremely probable that it was an important feast-day even before the introduction of Buddhism.² Special celebrations connected with the date have two distinct elements, the element of mimicry and the element of foolery. On that day, in the villages men dress themselves as animals, wearing appropriate masks, and dance through the village. The animal most commonly imitated is a sort of unicorn known to myth only. The desire to mimic animals probably came before the desire to mimic spirits, and I think the mimicry of animals, such as that we see in these celebrations, was the earliest attempt at the dramatic by the Burmese. Probably the mimicry of animals by men resulted in the presentation of animal puppet shows. In a Burmese puppet show, before the play begins, different animals come out one by

¹ A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*; F. A. Lombard, *Japanese Drama*; A. E. Zucker, *Chinese Theatre*.

² Some Buddhist festivals in Burma probably are of pre-Buddhist origins (cf. the English Christmas which has many elements derived from pre-Christian times). At least the special celebrations of Tazaungmôn described here are almost certainly pre-Buddhist.

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527 one, and each gives a special dance of its own.¹ At night, as part of the
 796 celebrations, there is a feast of fools. Young men and boys roam the
 536 village, throwing *zibyu* fruits at houses and stealing things, which will
 174 be found in the centre of the village the next morning: the objects of
 the good-natured theft are mostly articles that would provoke laughter—
 such as a lady's under-skirt; or those which would cause temporary
 inconvenience in the morning—such as cooking utensils, steps from
 stairs, or a piece from the roof. The Feast of the New Year is one
 of mirth and foolery. It is known as the Water Festival because on
 that occasion, every Burman takes a delight in throwing water at his
 neighbour and getting soaked himself as the result of the other's
 counter-attack. The men derive great enjoyment from drenching the
 women, who in their turn are not slow to have their revenge. Young
 men group themselves and dance joyously along the streets, at times
 being chased by bands of elderly maiden ladies who lie in wait to
 catch the ringleaders. When caught, the youths are lightly bound
 with silken cords and their faces are blackened with soot. Then they
 are made to perform a monkey dance before being granted their
 release. The spirit of fun apparent in these Burmese feasts of
 foolery is akin to that which moved the young clerks of the *Parlement*
 of Paris and the members of the Inns of Court in London to stage
 their Feasts of Fools in medieval times.²

527 As the villagers lead a communal life and every joy and sorrow of
 a villager is shared by all others, a joyful event is celebrated by a
 [541] public feast. Marriage, birth, the admission of a son to his novitiate
 (for every Burmese boy enters priesthood for at least a week), and
 the piercing of the ear of a daughter are occasions for mirth and jollity.
 At these feasts they sing and dance and mimic, groups of villagers vie
 [241] with each other for new methods of giving entertainment, and there
 is keen rivalry between youths and maidens. The most mirthful
 feast of all is the Harvest Feast in February, when the paddy has been
 reaped, and the village is ready to enjoy a well-earned rest of four
 after a working period of eight months.

527 These folk feasts are of great antiquity, though, because of the
 796 essentially unchanging life in the villages, they continue to exist
 even at the present day. The Tazungmôn and other Buddhist feasts

¹ The puppet show is described in a later chapter.

² Cf. E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, chap. xiii, 'The Feast of Fools'; also E. Weisford, *The Court Masque*, p. 2.

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have been celebrated year after year; at least since the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056, and at least since March, 638, when an early king of Pagan, Pope Sawrahan (613-40), drew up the present Burmese era, the dawn of every Burmese new year has been the occasion for mirthful water-throwing.¹

Buddhism had been introduced into the country through commercial relations with India long before the foundation of the kingdom of Pagan, but from the beginning it was only at second-hand and therefore feeble. The real religion of the Burmese before the re-introduction of Buddhism in 1056 was animistic, and they worshipped various spirits, known as *nats*. There were mediums, mostly women, who danced to please the spirits, and as the spirits were supposed to enter into the bodies of the mediums, sometimes it was believed that the spirits, and not the mediums, were actually dancing. Sometimes the medium herself actually believed that a spirit had taken control of her body, but usually she only pretended that a spirit had entered her, and gave an exhibition of acting. As the medium of each particular *nat* dressed herself in appropriate clothes, the spirit dances were essentially dramatic.² When Buddhism, in one of its purest forms, was introduced under Anawrahta, the great king realized the impossibility of attracting people suddenly to the new faith; so he compromised by recognizing the *nats* as Buddhist spirits and giving them shrines in his Shwazigôn Pagoda as its guardian spirits. When asked the reason, Anawrahta replied: 'Men will not come suddenly to the new faith. Let them come for their old gods, and they will gradually be won over.'³

So the worship of the *nats* lived on, and with the advance of

¹ Shway-Yoe (Sir George Scott) in *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, and Fielding Hall in *The Soul of a People* give detailed accounts of the feasts and life in the villages. However, as far as I have been able to find out, the Taunggyôn celebrations have never been described in any English work.

² These dances are still performed on spirit-feast days at Taungbyôn (near Mandalay), a small town given up to spirit worship since the days of Pagan's greatness and perhaps even before.

The belief in, as distinct from the worship of, spirits is not alien to Buddhism.

The chief works on the subject are: Sir R. C. Temple, *The Thirty-Seven Nats*; Grant Brown, 'The Taungbyôn Festival' in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1915; the same author's 'The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese' in *Folk-Lore*, 1921; and G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*.

³ G. E. Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

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18 So the worship of the ^{BURMESE DRAMA} ~~gods~~ ^{gods} lived on, and with the advance of civilization the spirit dances became elaborate, for though the belief was primitive, the people were no longer so. The dances benefited from the developments that had taken place in Burmese music which, as we have seen, flourished under the patronage of the Pagan kings. New spirits were added, and they were usually those of heroic princes. The dancers were now many, for the mediums turned themselves into dancing and music mistresses. The chief medium of each spirit dressed herself in the special dress of the spirit, but the junior mediums, who were equivalent to the chorus of an English revue, were in the dress of Burmese princesses. It is interesting to note the origin of this dress. The mediums realized the necessity of dressing themselves in fine raiment, but as everybody wore clothes of bright colours, the only solution of the problem was to don the dress of the court and official class, which the commoners were forbidden to wear by law, except during feasts and dances. When drama proper came into being, the hero and the heroine dressed themselves in the court dress, even when they were representing common characters.

3. MIRACLES AND INTERLUDES

After the fall of the kingdom of Pagan in A.D. 1257, Burma was the scene of fierce civil wars, but the trouble was mainly in the capitals; in the villages and small towns life went on in its joyous way. Religion continued to spread in spite of the fact that the throne of Pagan was no longer in existence to support it. Learning began to reach the remotest parts of the country, carried far and near by monks. To escape from the aimless strife of the civil wars, men turned towards literature. Money was lacking to compose poems in brick as had been done at Pagan, and men now expressed their love for the religion and their love for the beautiful in writing. The new literature further educated the people and made even stronger the already strong religious fervour. As a result, at village feasts and on days of public rejoicing, the people turned towards their religion for amusement and entertainment. So pageants depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and from his Birth Stories came into being.

Pageants were given on ordinary carts that were in use for all kinds of transport and which are still in use in backward parts of the country at the present day. Each cart, carried a group of (amateur) actors standing still and representing a set scene. Originally, no doubt, there were only a few carts representing scenes from different stories. Later, a pageant came to consist of many carts and many

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scenes. Still later, the scenes came to be taken from one story only, so that a whole story was given by the pageant. Dresses became quite gorgeous and the scheme elaborate. The pageant now needed organization. Therefore, the village came to be divided into two parts, eastern and western quarters or northern and southern quarters (the village was usually greater in length than breadth, being built along a main road). In larger villages and towns, the division was into four quarters. Each quarter was responsible for the production of a pageant. There was intense rivalry between the quarters to produce the finest pageant; it was usually friendly, but often enmity arose, and many pageants were occasions for free fights. The rivalry further developed the pageant, for new ideas would be introduced by one quarter to out rival the others. Soon the pageant became a play, its scenes coming to life.

The *Nibhatkhin* was the Burmese equivalent of the English miracle and mystery plays. It was the pageant come to life. With the pageant, the religious processions went along the main streets without stopping, each cart representing a set scene. But with the *Nibhatkhin*, each cart stopped at certain places. The most common of such places were the market-place, the house of the chief administrative officer, and the pagoda where the procession ended. At each of those places, each cart stopped, and the scene came to life. Dialogue and action were used. Therefore, people at the stopping places saw what was in effect a play.

The *Nibhatkhin* was extremely popular, and it lived on until recently, just as many of the English miracle plays continued to be produced right through the Elizabethan period. I saw one in the out-of-the-way town of Pauk as recently as 1916. However, I do not think that *Nibhatkhins* are produced anywhere nowadays. Sometimes one sees a procession on cars and motor lorries as a sort of reminiscence of the *Nibhatkhin*. But such processions are mere shows and lack the essential features of the Burmese miracle plays.

It was for the entertainment of the populace that the *Nibhatkhin* came into being, and as the Burmese entertainment connotes laughter, soon the element of humour came into the *Nibhatkhin*. At first none of the characters was made humorous, for they all came out of religious stories. And so the clown was introduced. The clown or *Lu-byet* ('the non-serious man') was put into the *Nibhatkhin* as an extra character, an attendant on the prince-hero. He was extremely popular, and soon another clown, an attendant on the princess-heroine,

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536* was introduced. The clowns were usually males, though later a female clown-attendant of the princess occasionally appeared. The clown was so popular that he continued to appear as an extra character even when the plays of the great dramatists came to be produced later. He was essentially outside the play. He made up his own part, he invented his own dialogue, and made up his jokes as the play moved along. However, even with the *Nibhatkhin*, he was not allowed to interfere with the movement of the play and its story. He played and joked at the beginning of the first scene when the actual story had not begun, he gave sometimes an outline of the story and its sources, and he gave information regarding the production of the procession and the play. He was the most privileged person among the actors, for he alone could without offence laugh at, and satirize, all things and all persons.

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536* However, the clown was essentially unconnected with the actual story, and soon the actual characters came to be burlesqued. As the devil in the English miracle plays, the villain of the *Nibhatkhin* (in the Birth Stories, the villain was a previous incarnation of Devadat who repeatedly tried to harm the Buddha) became a humorous and popular character. The Burmese love of humour and gentle satire would have turned the whole *Nibhatkhin* into pure farce had not a convention arisen with regard to the presentation of religious characters. The Buddha was never to be represented on the stage. Stories about him up to the time he actually attained Buddhahood could be presented, but no one should impersonate him when he had become the Buddha. It was soon followed by another convention that the character of an *arahat* (saint) should not be presented unless it was absolutely necessary, and then only when the part was to be taken by an able and 'serious' actor, who must be actually keeping a fast on the day and night the *Nibhatkhin* was being presented. As a person keeping a fast has to behave in a dignified manner, that convention prevented the part from being turned into a humorous one.

With all these developments, people did not forget that the *Nibhatkhin* was essentially a religious show presented in connexion with religious festivals, and therefore further development was impossible. The conservatism of the village, the dislike of the amateur actors to be in any way profane or thought to be so, the restricted scope of the stories and the characters, all prevented any further development of the religious drama as such.

178 witnessed Burmese plays.¹ Ridgeway approves of that theory. He
536* maintains that the tree is symbolic of the worship of the *nats*: In an
114 appendix to the book he quotes a letter from a resident in Burma
(which arrived too late to be discussed in the book itself), describing
[176] some sort of a *nat* ritual where a spirit was supposed to be dwelling in a
[796] tree. However, *nats* are supposed to dwell, not only in trees, but also
in houses, mountains, streams, lakes, on Mount Mayyu, in fact every-
where, and it is extremely unlikely that the tree should have been chosen
specially to represent the abode of the *nat*. In all the ritual connected
with the worship of the thirty-seven *nats*, the use of a tree does not occur
except in the case of the *nat*, U-Yin-Gyi. When offerings are made
to him, a wooden representation of a forked branch of a tree is used.
But that symbol is used only when that particular spirit alone is
being worshipped, i.e. when all the *nats* are being worshipped *en bloc*
the symbol is not used. U-Yin-Gyi has no special connexion with
the stage, and he is essentially connected with Lower Burma; and
Upper Burma, not Lower, was the home of Burmese drama. And
what Colonel Yule took to be a vague answer was the true answer.
What he saw was an interlude and not a developed play, and, as has
been stated, the scene of the interlude was almost always the forest,
for it needed nothing except a tree to indicate the scene. Therefore,
the tree which the ambassador saw was a piece of stage scenery and
nothing more.

536* Though Ridgeway's theory that the drama had its origins in the
795 worship of the *nats*, therefore, is not founded on fact, his contention
that the Burmese professional actors are the lineal descendants of the
mediums who impersonated the spirits of the dead is not wrong.
But the fact that the actors are the descendants of such persons should
not mislead us into thinking the drama to be a descendant of spirit
worship. There is a great danger of being thus misled if one knows
the various stage conventions without knowing the real history of the
drama. And had Ridgeway been acquainted with those conven-
tions, which (strangely enough) were not known to him and his
informants, he might have been strengthened in his view. The
most important of the stage conventions is the *nat* chorus which
often acts as a 'curtain-raiser' to the actual play. The chorus
composed of females comes out and sings and dances to various *nat*

¹ H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855.*

BURMESE KINSHIP

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38. *yauccá* Husband (referential).
 39. *mù* Husband's younger brother; husband's younger sister's husband. 601
 40. *khè'ou* Elder sister's husband; husband's elder brother; husband's elder sister's husband.
 41. *yaummà* Husband's sister; husband's brother's wife.

As may readily be seen by inspection of the charts, this kinship system reflects clearly the bilateral family structure, with an absence of terminological differentiation on the basis of the sex of the connecting relative. The other outstanding characteristic is the recognition of relative age at many points. For each generation a distinct set of terms is used. On ego's generation all cousins are merged with siblings; the terms are differentiated, however, according to relative age. In the first ascending generation, it will be noted, parents' siblings are terminologically distinguished according to degree of age relative to the parent. In the first descending generation, however, the factor of age loses significance; sex is the sole differentiating factor, apart from distinguishing terms for ego's own children. On successive descending generations sex distinction is absent and all relatives of a single generation are subsumed under a single kinship term.

Behaviorally as well as terminologically, relative age is the all-important hub upon which the wheel of Burmese social life revolves. Deference to one's elders is reflected in such customs as carrying things for them, refraining from sitting with one's head higher than those of elders, and avoiding postures in which the feet are extended towards such persons. 561 602 [516]

Beyond such matters of etiquette, the importance of age is even more fundamentally demonstrated in the showing of obeisance to one's elders. This is done on all the important ceremonial occasions. Four such occasions are regarded as obligatory times for paying one's respects. These are the beginning and the end of the Buddhist "Lent"—a period of about three months, roughly from mid-July to mid-October—the New Year, and the harvest. Respect is paid to all of one's elders in the parental generation and above. A visit is made at which an offering, valuable or symbolic, is brought and the elder's blessings are received. [79] ●

SOCIAL RELATIONS OF KIN

Husband-Wife. The household is normally composed of husband and wife and their offspring. It is a bilateral, limited type of family structure, contrasting markedly with the patrilineal extended Chinese family and joint family of India. 593 [592] [594]
 Unlike the position of the wife in the Chinese and Indian family systems, that of the Burmese wife is not one of an outsider living in a group dominated by her

[Text continues on page 442]

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29. NOVICES MAKING THE ROUND FOR DAILY FOOD (P. 18).

CHAPTER III

ADOLESCENCE

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30. THAMI-U ARRIVED FOR HER PETE.

BETWEEN the ages of ten and sixteen Burman lads enter upon the monastic novitiate, an occasion celebrated with a brilliant fête. The adoption of a religious life by girls is much less general, even for the short time it is embraced by the youths; and when it is adopted, there is no ceremony. But a holiday answering to that of the boy's novitiate is held in honour of the girl, especially when she is the first-born child—*thami-u*. In her case the ear-boring ceremony, if not the piercing itself, is deferred to the age of ten or twelve. The child, equipped in royal attire, or an imitation of it, and wearing a queen's crown (*sibon*), is the centre of a great gathering of relatives and friends, who are entertained with music and plays.

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The lad who has prepared to renounce the world for a season, or it may be for life, is called *shindung*. The *shindung* festivals usher in the religious or lenten season—*wa*, June to September—the season of rain in Bahar,

p. 14

MONASTIC NOVITIATE

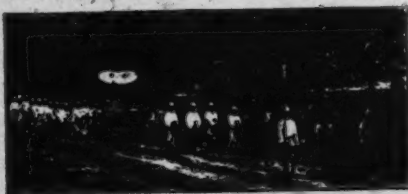
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31. SHINLAUNG ARRIVED FOR HIS FETE.

to the possession of which the regular recluse (*yahán*) is restricted. They consist of the *thingán* or monastic yellow robes, *viz.*, the loin-cloth (*thimbding*), upper cloth (*egast*), wrapper (*thingán-dyf*), and red girdle (*kabán*); a needle (*at*), wherewith to piece his clothing together, a hard-baked black earthen pot (*thabít*) in which to collect the morning dole of food, a filter (*yesít*) to strain the drinking water clear of living things, and a razor (*thindón-dá*) to shave the head and face (excepting the eyebrows). The garments are of plain cloth, without any cut, but torn into strips and joined up again (by the donors) in commemoration of the primitive rule of piecing the garments together from rags, as well as to deprive the cloth of value. The cloth is mostly cotton, but silk and wool are also offered. The stuffs are dyed a bright ochre, with chips of Jackwood. By repeated washings the colour deepens to tan. These varying shades produce a picturesque effect. The recluse customarily also receives sandals to wear, a deer-skin to sit and sleep upon, a broom to sweep his dwelling with, and a large palm-leaf fan, both for a shelter from the sun and a screen from the sight of womankind. The *thabít* is slung in a yellow cotton net, and has a lacquerwork stand and cover. In respect of chattels, however, these primitive tokens of privation have sunk to a form. The recluses have many changes of raiment and the use of spacious dwellings

the home of the Buddha. In order to accentuate the renunciation of the world which the lad is making, he is arrayed and attended like a prince and makes a royal progress on horseback or in a chariot to the monastery. Attendants bear gilt umbrellas over him, and a retinue of relatives and friends carry his *partikaya* and offerings for the use of the monastery. The *partikaya* are the eight chattels,



32. SHINLAUNG PAGEANT (BURMA PROPER).

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41. YAHAN ON THE GROUND FOR SUN.

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but must undergo a fresh probation. Over and above the precepts observed by the *goyin*, the *yahan* observes one hundred detailed injunctions. He must not merely respect life, but also the means to life. He may not wantonly injure a blade of grass. Cleanliness is particularly enjoined. A notable injunction is not to lay up any store of food. He must not use a raised sleeping-place, though by day he reclines on the couches presented to the monastery. The *yahan* sweeps his dwelling, draws water, washes his clothing, and so forth, when there are not *goyin* or lay-disciples to perform these services for him. Otherwise his occupations are only those of teaching, study, and contemplation. In Lent the *yahan* remains indoors from sunset to sunrise. At this season he also frequently selects a forest retreat for contemplation in the early morning hours (*wasawung*). The *yahan* practises confession to his brethren of the Assembly, all of whom are equals, but who defer to one another, according to seniority, which is reckoned

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towards the higher spiritual condition of *Ayahat* and *Ayattapal*. The primitive appellation is *Bikkhu* (Pali *Bikkhu*), one dependent on alms. The spiritual state preceding *Yahan*, that of the man so imbued with the spirit of the Buddha's teaching as to ~~leave~~ membership of his Assembly, is called *Thawtapan*. The candidate for full membership must possess the qualifications for the degree of *goyin*, in addition to a knowledge of the rule of life of the *yahan* and a modicum of religious learning. Most *yahan* are *ngi-byin*—pure from youth—that is, have passed direct from their youthful novitiate to full membership. Men of any condition may be received, and at any age above twenty, if free from debt and other ties,



42. BUDDHIST RECLUSE.

BUDDHIST INSTITUTIONS

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44. ANCIENT THEIN AT PAGAN.

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bership of the Assembly, illuminated with lacquer on copper or ivory leaves, is read by turns by the five members of the concave assembled for the reception of the new member. This solemnity is undertaken in the *thein*, a *hut* set apart for the *Things* alone. No lay persons enter the precincts, but they may be spectators from a distance. The new *yahs* is called *Uparin*, sojourner recluse, or assistant to the *Uppine*, or *Pandyl*, *Kindyl* (incumbent) of the monastery. In 1891 there were 13,613 *phadyl*, 6,668 sojourner *yahs*, and 13,500 probationers in the monasteries of Burma, which numbered 15,371, in a Buddhist population of about seven millions.

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The dedication of the site for building such a *thein* (Pāli *sima*) is preceded by the solemnity of *thein-shamok*. Ground so dedicated can never be alienated to any other use. In this respect the *thein* is more sacred than the temples in general. After the site has been levelled, it is surrounded with a trench, into which water is led. In the centre a small well is sunk (*ait-dwin*). The *yahs*, not less than twenty-four in number, assemble on the spot, over which a gay pavilion (*mandat*) has been erected, and wait for the water from the trench to percolate to the well. When this occurs, the site is said to have "taken" (*saug*). Otherwise it must be rejected. The *yahs* gather round the well and intone scriptural passages from a

not by age, but by the number of lenten seasons they have belonged to the Assembly. Vigils and restriction of night rest are not practised. The rule of life of the *yahs* is laid down in the *Wini* (*Vinaya* *Bitaks*), one of the three divisions ("baskets") of the Buddhist scriptures. A *hamkand*, or breviary of scripture, relating to mem-



45. YAHAS ASSEMBLED FOR DEDICATION OF THEIN.

346 *hambawd*. The laity assembled outside the precincts let off rockets and guns
 796 in celebration of the event. Finally, the ceremony of *ye-thi-ka*, the pouring
 778 of water (No. 100), is performed by the grantor of the site—as at every other

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46. ILLUMINATED NAMDAWA.

religious dedication—to signify that the property has been dedicated for ever. The precincts of the *thein* are marked by low boundary pillars, mostly of Sagding marble, set in the trench, which is then filled in. A different form of *thein* is the *ye-thein*, which is built over the water to effect its isolation.

792 Although the *yakhs*, as already stated, may not ask for anything, he may
 735 decline what is offered. He signifies this by inverting his *thabfit* (*thabfit-
 hmaut*). The action has become a symbol for excommunication. The *yakhs*
 might assemble in the *thein* and perform *thabfit-hmaut* against a layman for

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heinous wickedness. His house would be passed by in collecting *sau* and all offerings tendered by him refused. The practice has become obsolete; it is said to have no warrant in the scriptures, and to be contrary to their spirit.

Where the people are very prosperous and the *yakhs* are not many, the collecting of *sau* in the streets has sunk to a formality observed by the novices only, who on return to the monastery empty their *thabfit* to the dogs. But in other circumstances the sojourner *yakhs*, novices and scholars live on the *sau*. An ordinance of the Buddha dispenses the *yakhs* from collecting his food from house to house if there be pious people who proffer him his sustenance at his abode. The founder of the monastery (*Kyaukse-taga*), who nomin-

47. *Sau* SENT BY THE SYNDICATE.

BUDDHIST INSTITUTIONS

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48. FOREST KYAUNG.

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ates the incumbent, regularly undertakes the support of the *phadyl*, and frequently of his sojourner *yakhs* as well. The food, which is the best of its kind, is brought every morning by the daughters and young children of the supporter, or, in the case of joint support, by children of the leading families in turn. An ornamented vessel is used, having a tall finial to the cover (*dr*). The supplies are received by the lay scholars or the novices, and by them served to the *yakhs*. The principal meal is taken shortly before noon, for no food may be eaten after that hour till the following sunrise. Water may be drunk and betel chewed at any time. Tobacco-smoking is discountenanced, especially in Burma Proper, where the religious views are strictest. Burma furnishes the standard both for scholarship and practice, and trains most of the incumbents of the monasteries of Pegu. Scholars and novices may prepare food at the monastery from raw supplies. These the *yakhs* may not even handle. Hired labour (*kappias dayaks*) may be attached to the monastery by the supporter for the preparation of food and other services. In some cases lands have been dedicated for the maintenance of monasteries and temples. But the *yakhs* have no concern with their administration. Supplies of raiment, chattels and food are dedicated to the use of the recluses when the distinction of their presence is solicited, especially at *shinlawng* fêtes and funerals. The annual provision of raiment (*hstfin thingds*) is made between the months of *Thadindylnt* and *Tasduangmā*. The offerings of necessities are supplemented by accessories of every sort—books and writing materials, mats,



50. VILLAGE KYAUNG.

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ST. SYMBOL OF MYINMO-DAUNG.

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a feature of various festivals. In substantial masonry it is a frequent adjunct of the temples.

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The *Bo* tree (*Bawdt-bin*), together with the rest of the *figus* family, is sacred to the Hindu. The *Bo* is a variety of the *pipal* (*figus religiosa*), a deciduous *figus* with long copper-coloured acumina to the leaves. It is sacred to the Buddhists because it was while resting under the shade of a *Bo* tree at Gāya in Bahār, 600 years before Christ, that Gawdama realised the vanity of the ceremonial and ascetic systems, resisted temptation, and attained to supreme enlightenment, which, as Buddha, it became his mission to impart to mankind. "The *Bo* tree is to Buddhists what the Cross is to Christians" (Bigandet). The original *Mahā-bodhi* was piously tended while Buddhism flourished in India, and trees propagated from it were planted by Buddhist pilgrims. Such a tree is the historical *Bo* tree at Anurādhapūra in Ceylon, planted in 245 B.C. and still flourishing. Young plants cultivated from this tree are brought home to

of the Burman type is the one cast for the Shwe-Dagōn Payā by the Emperor Sinbyu Shin in 1775, which weighs forty-one tons.

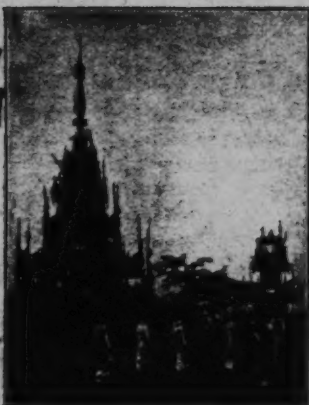
According to the Burman cosmogony the world consists of four great islands, North, South, East and West, surrounded by the ocean. Burma and the known countries are situated in the south island. In the centre of all rises Mount Meru (*Myinmo-dauung*). This centre of the universe is symbolized by a conventional tower provided with niches or caverns for mythical inhabitants of every sort, *Nat*, *Zawdyt* (sorcerers), *Blu* (ogres), monsters half human and half brute, and dragons (No. 392). The symbol of *Myinmo-dauung*, made of bamboo, with paper and tinsel, is



ST. BAWDT TREE.

PAYADYÚN

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88. METHILA ON THE HOUND FOR SUN.

struggles. Apart from this and the serfdom referred to at p. 32, slavery has only played a subordinate rôle in Burma within historic times. The *payadyún*, and they alone, are treated as outcasts by both of these populations. They beg for alms and also appropriate the offerings brought to the shrines in profusion at festivals. Their right to beg is admitted, although they frequently accumulate money and build fine houses.

Lepers (*and*) in many cases quit their families of their own accord and settle in the *payadyún* colony. In some places they were compelled to do so. The settlements have thus acquired the semblance of leper colonies. There are a few country villages of this character. Indigent lepers beg for alms. In 1891 there were 6,000 lepers in Burma, the

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highest ratio in the Indian Empire. There are now four leper asylums. Casual mendicancy is almost unknown in Burma.

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The Burman and Brahman soothsayers (p. 158) are regular frequenters of the shrines. The Burman astrologer (*bedin-sayd*) casts horoscopes on the Brahman model (No. 279) and designates the days auspicious for undertakings. He takes his name from proficiency in reckoning, and is consulted about business calculations that cannot be done mentally.

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The Buddhist duty-days (*abbi-mé, thadín*) follow the quarters of the moon. On these days the pious laity of both sexes and sedate years observe the rule of *pothudaw* and *mithila* from sunrise to sunrise (*abbi-saung*). They adopt sober attire, or else white cotton clothing, which is considered the plainest of any. In the forenoon men and women separately repair to the temple rest-houses, whither food for the morning meal, which has been collected the previous evening from religious donors

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99. SOOTHSAYER.

BURMA

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60. PAYA SUN-KAN.

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verse after his lead (*thila-kan*). Passages from other scriptures are added, with their interpretations. This is called *Tayd-haw*—the preaching of the Law. The great Mun King, Yazadiyit of Pegu, in the year 1400 A.D., is reported to have been so impressed by the preaching of a *yahdu* that he abandoned a campaign on which he had embarked. More than once in Burman history the peaceful contest of building rival temples has been substituted for battle by opposing armies.

The Buddha has passed out of existence. While existent, all that the Buddha could accomplish for any being was the human service of showing him the way to work out deliverance by individual effort. Self-reliance is the cardinal principle. There is none to hear prayer. The true significance of the popular worship is not apprehended unless this be borne in mind. No virtue can surpass that of the Inestimable Master (*Myasun Payd*) who fulfilled the Law and bequeathed it to men. To cultivate the memory of his transcendent merit is itself meritorious in the first degree. Such is the personal side of the cult, to which the effigies of the founder appeal. Before the images of the Buddha are performed the gestures of homage, and are placed offerings symbolical of veneration—tapers lighted at the shrine, flowers

(*Payd sun-kan*), or privately prepared, is conveyed. The day is devoted to contemplation, and the night is passed at the *saydt*. Those who keep the duty-day present offerings at the *zedi* and the adjoining *kyauing*. At either of these places a *yahdu* is invited to rehearse the precepts, which the laity chant verse by



61. YAHAN RECITING THE PRECEPTS (TAYA-HAW).

NEW-YEAR FESTIVAL

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412. SNAKE-CHARMER'S PERFORMANCE.

cremation of the *yahán*. Burmese New-Year—moon-change at *Tagi*—falls in April, as the sun enters the sign of Aries. The calendar has been regulated on the Brahman model with intercalary days and months (Appendix E). New-Year marks the greatest crisis in the seasons; the heat has reached its climax, to drop abruptly at the break of the south-west monsoon. Now is the time of drought; many of the wells are empty, and water

has to be fetched from a distance. There is no greater luxury than abundance of water at this season; water is the most seasonable offering, and great supplies are stored in the jars at the *kyauks*. In a symbolic spirit, water is poured over the images of the Buddha. But the great feature of the New-Year festival is the burlesque of these libations. In the true spirit of the carnival, the women douse the men, and the men douse the women, all regardless of their festal attire. The young women in particular wait in ambush for the gallants, perhaps to be caught in a second ambush by some urchin. The liberty of water-throwing lasts for the days of *akyò*, *akyá*, *akyát*, and *atít*, the stages of the journey which a *thadyá* makes from heaven to earth to see the works of men if they be good. The legend is probably derived from the Hindu myth of the rain-god Indra, to whom water is offered at the season of his expected descent. A religious feature of the festival is the ransom of cattle. An animal kept for slaughter by the Indian Musulman butcher is borrowed and gaily decked out, with its horns gilded. It is led round the village or quarter of the town, followed by a festive throng, and contributions are gathered until the price of the animal is made up, when it is set free at the *kyauk* to be an evidence of goodwill to all things living.



413. NEW-YEAR FETE (PAYA-YE-ONG).

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[821]



414. WATER-THROWING AT NEW-YEAR.

Party feeling, which often runs high between the quarters of a village, with their rival *kyauing* and *sadi*, finds an outlet at *Tagu* in the tug-of-war (*lum-siwi*). As the superstitious whistle for the wind, so do they expect to tug in the monsoon by this means, at the season when everything is panting for rain.

After *Tagu*, the next festival season is *Wad*—in June—the commencement of the Buddhist Lent. This season is signalled

by the *Shindung ftes*, described in Chapter III. During Lent there is no regular festival.

The great festival of *Thadindyut* celebrates the close of Lent. It falls in October, when the rains are generally over, and is the one for which the most extensive preparations are made. Every festival is signalled by the offerings made to the *yahn*. But now they are literally "poured" in profusion, as the word implies (*sun-lung*). *Yazam*—paths fenced with bamboo trellis, such as those prepared for the progress of royalty—are got ready along the chief thoroughfare. Through these on the morning of the great day the *yahn* defile in endless procession. As many as a thousand *yahn* may be invited to receive the *Thadindyut* offerings in a large town. The offerings are poured into the alms-bowls by the laity; scholars are stationed at intervals to relieve the *yahn* of their loads of offerings. After the *yahn* come *pothudaw* and *mithild*. Both ends of the *yazam* are decorated with arches of bamboo and tinsel. About these are grouped life-size figures of mythical import—dragons to guard the entrance, princes and princesses of the *nats* to take part in the honour done to the *Things* (No. 151). In the evenings fire-

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415. WANDON PROCESSION AT NEW-YEAR.

FESTIVALS

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balloons are sent off, and the rivers are illuminated with rafts carrying lamps which are set adrift. Labyrinths of bamboo are erected round the *sedi*, which entertain the children and especially the hill-people, who pique themselves, not

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416. NEW-YEAR TUG-OF-WAR.

without reason, on their sense of locality. These labyrinths are called *Wingabá*, after the mountain maze, to which Prince Wéthandayá was banished by his father, in the *sáti* legend.

Tazung-món is the next festival after *Thadindyút*; it is kept in Pegu, but not in Burma Proper. At this season Buddhists commemorate the miraculous journey of Gawdama Buddha to the *nat* country after the death of his mother, to impart to her the enlightenment which had come to him on earth, and by means of which he had attained peace. Spires of bamboo-work and tinsel—the *tazung-daing*—are built twenty to fifty feet high, as symbols of the stair by which Gawdama ascended. These are carried round the place with music, and are finally dedicated at the *sedi* (No. 422). In the months of *Tazung-món* and *Thadindyút* the *katfin-thingán* are dedicated, and the *mathó-thingán* are woven. The *katfin-thingán* is the annual supply of the primitive *partikaya*, and is of a nominal character, owing to the profusion of offerings at other times. The *mathó-thingán* is a cloth wherewith to deck the images of the Buddha and the *paung* of the *sedi* (Nos. 429, 449). It is the offering of the women who weave it,



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417. HINLAUNG AT THADINDYÚT
FESTIVAL.

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418. SUNLAUNG AT THADINDYUT FESTIVAL.

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of the thousand *gāthā* or stanzas of the *Wēthandayā sat*, the legend of Gawdama Buddha's last incarnation but one, closely prefiguring the final incarnation.

The above are the Buddhist festivals, which are celebrated by the whole population together, with all the *śīlat* they can give them. The only other recurring observances of a religious character have nothing to do with Buddhism, and are rejected by all earnest and enlightened Buddhists. These observances, if not furtively conducted, as is often the case, are kept by individuals only, or by households at a time; they have sufficient in common with the *nat* worship of the hill tribes, to show what the original Burman and Taláing worship may have been. Unlike the Karén, who knows only of evil *nats*, the Burman has both good and evil spirits. The former belong

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to the land of the *sat* romance, the latter are chiefly the survival of the primitive paganism. In the Burman cosmogony, *nat-yua* is the delectable land to which, by a courtesy analogous to the German "*hoch-*" and "*höchst-*" *selig*," the kings are said to migrate at their demise.

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A higher order than *nat* is *thadyā* and *thadyā-min*, and above these the highest order of being, *byammd*, the cloud-



419. FIRE-BALLOONS AT THADINDYUT.

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The Buddhism of Burma, then, lies in between two levels. On the one level, there is the scholarly tradition of the monasteries, frequently in touch with Ceylon, watchful against heresies, pondering the scriptures, upholding the essential emphases of the Hinayāna tradition, steadily prevailing against more primitive ideas. On the other level, there is the survival of Animism, linked to the conservatism of human nature, infiltrating the popular Buddhism. We can, therefore, accept Burmese Buddhism as a valid and typical expression of the Hinayāna tradition. At the same time, we can expect to find certain distinctive, Burmese features.

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5. *Characteristics of Burmese Buddhism*

a. The characteristic of Burmese Buddhism which has been most frequently remarked is its buoyancy. "The Buddhist faith may be as dreary ... as many say it is, but no one would imagine it who looks on the gaily = dressed laughing crowd of men and maidens who throng to the pagoda feasts."⁴⁵ Only a Chaucer could do justice to these festivals, remarks a modern writer,⁴⁶ and an earlier observer concluded that "the Burmese do not fully believe the first of the Four Noble Truths that life is suffering."⁴⁷

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Climate and circumstance affect religious interpretation. In India, where Buddhism was begotten, "India, with its hot climate, its poverty and suffering, the pessimistic mood which looks upon life as a great evil rather than an achievable good, seems natural."⁴⁸ This may be. And in the subtropical climate of Burma, where people live in ephemeral bamboo houses and vegetation grows quickly and as quickly passes away, it is natural to believe that "All is change." But in Southern Burma at least, where a little labour wins a sufficient sustenance from the fruitful earth, and moonlight nights are soft and friendly, it is not so natural to add that "All is suffering."

Some observers insist that we must look beneath the surface of this Burmese gaiety. "Delightful as this sunny temperament is, it does not go deep enough to be called optimism."⁴⁹ Nobody, however, can question the Burmese vivacity — a vivacity which expresses itself in a lively, rhythmic music, and a delight in colour. "The secret of our happiness lies in our devotion to our beautiful religion," writes Mrs. Hla Oung, and the

⁴⁵ Scott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, chap. XIX, p. 257.

⁴⁶ G. Appleton, *Buddhism in Burma*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ *M.B.E.*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ A. K. Reischauer, *Studies in Japanese Buddhism*, chap. 2, p. 49.

⁴⁹ *M.B.E.*, p. 53.

771 term 'beautiful' is here significant.⁵⁰ A Burmese *pué* or open-air variety
 779* performance will begin at dusk and sustain a frolic of wit and dance until
 [796] the morning, and the same vivacity informs the frequent religious pageants and dramas. If the underlying Buddhism is indeed pessimism, it is at least 'touched with hope and mysticism.'⁵¹

771 Fielding Hall has suggested that there is an element of Nature-mysticism in the Burman's outlook. Both his Animism and his Buddhism encourage him to believe that he is intimately related to all Nature: Buddhism because it will allow no separate souls but sees all Life as one; Animism because "legends and tales, the spirits of hills and rivers, of the trees and flowers" express the fact that "Life is a great whole."⁵²

779* A Nature poem by a fifteenth century Burmese Buddhist may be regarded as some corroboration of this estimate. The writer conceives all Nature doing homage to the Buddha:

"A clamour of colour fills the vernal woods.

Tender fruits peep from the budded quicks.

Mellow clusters, luscious as ambrosia, sway in the air....

The acid lime, the delicious custard-apple, the juicy mango, the restless *petthet* and the riotous *grewia*

Rush to render their homage to the thrice-adored Sage."⁵³

In his later work,⁵⁴ Fielding Hall seems to equate Burmese Buddhism with a vague and woolly pantheism in which all tigers are lambs and all roads lead to truth, but at least he sees the poetry of Burmese life and religion. Later reflection led him to correct the view contained in his *Soul of a People* that the Burmese feeling for Nature was separate from their Buddhism.⁵⁵ Instead, he now discerned a fusion giving colour and buoyancy to their faith. "Here was the world the Greeks had lived in. All the gods yet lived to those who still had ears to hear their voices in the forest sounds, eyes to see them flitting through the darkened woods or bathing in the mountain pools.... Were the trees alive? Surely they were. They had their life, they were not dead unlovely things, but living." Comparison with Greek ideas has occurred to others. Greek gods and Burmese *Nats* are similarly very human and capricious, it is suggested.

779* The Greek comparison recurs to mind when we consider a further aspect of Burmese Buddhism — its social, with which may be joined

621 ⁵⁰ "The Women of Burma." *Buddhism*, Vol. I, No. 1, (Rangoon).

⁵¹ *M.B.E.*, p. 10.

⁵² H. Fielding Hall, *The Inward Light*, chap. III, p. 24.

⁵³ "The 'Tawla' of Shin Uttamagyaw," ed. by U. Po Byu, free trans. by Maung Ba Han. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. VII, pt. II, (1917).

⁵⁴ *The Inward Light*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7, 24; cf. *The Soul of a People*, chap. XX, pp. 269 ff.

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its national character. The frequent festivals not only enliven, they express and stabilise the community life. They are often local, but certain shrines, such as the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, have become centres of pilgrimage. In a country which has had a strong tendency to de-centralization — the king's authority was often very weak — the Buddhist Order has made for cohesion, and, in modern times, Buddhist monks have been active in the movement for national independence.

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In spite, however, of this social expression, Buddhism in Burma, as elsewhere, is very much a matter of *individual* concern. We have seen this individualism within the monastery. It is equally marked outside the monastery. One of the most popular *sats* is the story of Wethandaya, who, in order to gain his own salvation, gives away his wife and family to a rapacious Brahmin.⁵⁶ "Each must bear his own burden," is a favourite quotation.⁵⁷ Its primary reference may be to moral responsibility.

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This brings us to the decidedly *ethical* character of Burmese Buddhism. *Kutho* (worthiness) is the central concept here, and "it is clear that the Burmese Buddhists have a more *mathematical* conception of Merit than other folk." "The ordinary belief is very concrete — so many good deeds mean so much to one's credit in another world."⁵⁸ Sometimes very material rewards are indicated. "The reward for building a monastery is a palace in a *Nat* heaven with seven towers, and in this palace dwell seven hundred *Nat* wives.... For a gift of sticks for use in a bath room, the donor will be reborn with perfumed body."⁵⁹

Almsgiving is a sure means of 'heaping up *Kutho*.' Since the benefit accruing to the donor partly depends on the worthiness of the object, the maintenance of religion is a valued means of self-help. Hence the many pagodas. Hence the gifts to the monasteries. There is no more coveted title than 'Builder of Monasteries.' Hence, too, the welcome to the monk as he comes in the early morning with his begging bowl. The monk may seem to be the chief recipient. But in the things which matter, he is the donor.

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Though others may thus provide the opportunity, essentially the activity is self-help. Emphasis is laid on individual responsibility. It is something a man must do for himself.

It is something he *can* do. Thus the conception of *Kutho* challenges any animistic idea that man is altogether at the mercy of capricious spirits.

⁵⁶ M.B.B., pp. 44, 103.

⁵⁷ M.B.B., p. 45.

⁵⁸ M.B.B., p. 51, p. 76. The usual, though inadequate translation of *Kutho*, as already observed, is Merit.

⁵⁹ M.B.B., p. 51.